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CURRENT CHRISTIAN THINKING

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CURRENT CHRISTIAN THINKING

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PREFACE

This volume is intended to help those who are interested in the present status of Christian beliefs to understand some of the crucial issues presented to religious thinkers today. The important questions of theology are no longer indicated by the denominational divisions of Protestantism. Slowly but surely a new alignment is coming about which unites those who regard Christianity as an authoritative institution in opposition to those who are convinced that Christianity is to be explained in terms of social, historical development. This difference of view cuts athwart existing denominations. The present survey undertakes to interpret the important trends in theological thinking in the United States of America. No attempt is made to deal with developments in other lands. Abstruse theological discussion has been avoided so as to present the living issues of religious thinking in terms intelligible to the general reader.

For the benefit of those who may wish to read further, a few selected titles are furnished at the end of each chapter.

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I

ROMAN CATHOLICISM

The most imposing Christian body in the world is the Roman Catholic Church. With the exception of some very minor movements, all Protestant denominations are directly or indirectly offshoots from Catholicism. The Catholic Church regards the Protestant movement as the expression of misguided religious thinking and is patiently waiting until the various non-Catholic branches of Christendom either shall see their error and repent or shall disappear because of lack of religious vitality. The Reformation was by no means as complete a break with Catholicism as has usually been supposed. Many of the fundamental convictions of the medieval church have persisted down to this day. Some of the questions now vexing Protestant denominations are really issues bequeathed by Catholicism to religious bodies which are not properly organized to compel a dogmatic decision. The significance of many characteristic religious movements of our day can be adequately judged only against the background of Catholicism.

I

First of all, it is important to realize how the Catholic thinks of his religion. For him it is not a human experiment, nor is it a mere development of man's natural impulses and powers. Christianity is held to be a divinely established system. Coming, as the Catholic believes it

does, from God, it is absolutely perfect. It is true that those who interpret and administer this religion may make mistakes; but back of the administration and the interpretation is the perfect religion which God himself appointed.

This conception of divine perfection gives the clew to the Catholic attitude on many questions. It means that the Catholic cannot make any real comparison of his own religion with other forms. Catholicism is unique. It alone has the sanction of almighty God. Proposals made by non-Catholic bodies for the reunion of Christendom are not even considered. Why should the perfect church compromise its perfection by recognizing other admittedly faulty religious bodies? The Catholic believes that there is only one true religion. Others are due to the pride or the sin or the ignorance of men. The one true perfect Church was established by God.

This belief in the absolute perfection of the Church is doctrinally elaborated in the Catholic teaching as to the origin of Christianity. According to this teaching, Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, came to earth and proclaimed and established the one divinely authorized religion. He taught to his chosen apostles its doctrines and rituals. He authorized and empowered them to transmit to their successors what they had been taught. Provision was thus made for the perpetual proclamation of the one true religion. The bishops, successors of the apostles, are officially authorized to direct the thinking and the practice of the Church and to preserve the "faith once delivered."

This conviction that Catholicism is the absolutely perfect religion is expressed in the doctrine of infallibility. "We may rest assured that an all-wise Providence who

commands His Church to speak in His name will so guide her in the path of truth that she shall never lead into error those that follow her teachings."[1] Catholic theology, therefore, constantly seeks "infallible" statements. The revelation which God has made in the Bible is declared to be infallible because it is God's word. The decisions of the Church, when these are rightly reached, are infallible. Finally, the pope

> when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that his Church should be endowed.[2]

It is difficult to exaggerate the influence of this theory of divine perfection. It is maintained not only in Catholicism. It was inherited by Protestantism and is to this day an important occasion of theological controversy. It is diametrically opposed to the spirit of modern scientific inquiry. It is a marvel that the conflicts between this kind of religion and the progress of science have been not more serious than they have.

As a matter of fact, however, there are several loopholes through which escape may be made from an unpleasant predicament. Infallibility belongs, of course, only to the officially qualified utterances authorized by God. It is only when an apostolic bishop speaks under the undoubted guidance of the Holy Spirit that he is absolutely correct in his teaching. Human frailty may at any given time invalidate even a bishop's thinking. In-

[1] J. Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers* (94th ed.), p. 68.

[2] *Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council, Fourth Session*, chap. iv.

deed, the utterances of the pope are infallible only when he speaks *ex cathedra*. But just when does he speak *ex cathedra?*[1]

The theory of infallibility gives a kind of security which would be impossible without this belief. It removes officially approved doctrines from the realm of questioning and assures the believer that in these doctrines he has final and unchanging truth. It gives to the defender of the faith a sense of being superior to those who have no infallible backing. Without this doctrine, Catholicism would lose its distinctive quality. "The Church is the work of an Incarnate God. Like all God's works, it is perfect. It is therefore incapable of reform. Is it not the height of presumption for men to attempt to improve upon the work of God?"[2]

While the Catholic Church bases its claims fundamentally on the doctrine that it is divinely authorized to teach the truth, it nevertheless contends that Catholic doctrine is in harmony with right reason. It would be a mistake to suppose that Catholicism stands defiantly on the basis of mere authority. Catholic scholars believe that true philosophy will reinforce Catholic doctrines. In order to understand the cultural aspects of Catholicism, we

[1] It is not always easy to know just what constitutes an official pronouncement. At the time of the condemnation of Galileo, and for some time after, it was usually assumed that the decree against his teaching was as absolute as anything could be. But in recent times, since the Copernican theory of astronomy has come to be generally accepted, Catholics have made the attempt to show that this decree condemned Galileo's attitude toward religious authority rather than his astronomical theory. It is, of course, self-evident that if the teaching of the Church is infallible, any statement which eventually proves to be fallible cannot have been an official teaching of the Church!

[2] Gibbons, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

must look for a moment at the type of philosophy favored by the Roman Church.

Over a quarter of a century ago, Pope Leo XIII decreed that the education of priests for the church should be organized on the basis of the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. This philosophy is the most famous compendium of late medieval thinking and embodies a very complete harmonization between the doctrines of the Church and the discoveries of human reason. Aquinas held that natural reason leads to certain affirmations concerning God and God's relations to the world. Philosophy is thus inherently religious in that it must recognize the existence of a Great First Cause. But God in his goodness has supplemented the discoveries of natural reason by truths which he has disclosed in a special revelation. These revealed truths would never have been discovered by mere human reason; but after they have been revealed, human reason can apprehend them and show that they are entirely compatible with what philosophy teaches. The theology of the Catholic Church is regarded as the crowning feature of a complete system of truth. Theology is the "Queen of all Sciences," for all human knowledge is partial and must be supplemented by the divine wisdom which comes by revelation.

Now the philosophy which appears in Thomas Aquinas represents for the most part the reworking of certain aspects of Greek philosophy. And when we recall that organized Christian theology was wrought out by men who were trained in Hellenistic thought, it is easy to see that there would be a general harmony between the theology which had come down in the Church and the philosophy which was inherited from Hellenism. It was felt

by the leaders of the Church that Christian doctrines could be so blended with the best philosophy that the combination would represent the highest kind of culture. Catholicism thus stood out as the educator of the world because it actually commanded the allegiance of the greatest thinkers and set forth the most complete system of thought.

But this philosophy was for the most part what we today would call "speculation." The slow and painful processes of minute inquiry which characterize modern science were not yet known. The proof of the truth of a proposition was found by showing that it was entirely consistent with itself and with other propositions. In other words, the logical perfection of an idea was taken as evidence of its truth.[1]

Now when this speculative method of thinking is applied to theological questions, it may be made to confirm any tenets which contain no inner inconsistencies. For example, the idea of infallibility was derived from the conviction that whatever God does must be absolutely perfect. Revelation, therefore, must be infallible; for a fallible revelation would be an inherently contradictory idea. The divine guidance of the Church must be infallible for the same reason. It is only in comparatively recent times that men have examined the precise content of the Bible to find out whether it is in fact infallible. Until the advent of biblical criticism the matter was usually settled by the a priori doctrine of infallibility.

[1] It is interesting to see how this a priori conception of perfection was at first carried over into scientific inquiry. For example, Copernicus assumed that the heavenly bodies moved in circles, because the circle is a "perfect" curve. It was only when more exact measurements were made that it was discovered that the planets move in elliptical orbits.

The harmony between the doctrines of the Catholic Church and the deliverances of human reason can be maintained fairly well so long as reason is employed in the analytic and speculative fashion made familiar by the great Schoolmen. That is why Catholic students study Thomas Aquinas, who so successfully blended the teachings of the Church with the conclusions of reasoning. If it be once granted that the God of the Catholic faith created the universe and ordered its movements, there can be absolutely no inconsistency between what we learn from God's creation and what we learn from God's revelation. If anyone believes himself to have discovered from a study of nature something which contradicts the utterances of revelation, he has been led astray by false philosophy. One of the cures for modernism proposed by Pope Pius X was the more assiduous study of the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas.

In the light of this confidence that all thinking must be in harmony with the teachings of the Church, we can understand the attitude of Roman Catholics toward modern learning. All education should exhibit the harmony between reason and the doctrines proclaimed by the Church. "False" philosophy should not be tolerated, since it may destroy religious faith. This explains the Catholic attitude toward education. Since it is forbidden in the United States to teach religion in the public schools, children in these schools form the habit of thinking concerning the world and concerning human life without ever asking whether their conclusions are in accord with divine revelation. The American educational system gives knowledge of temporal things but neglects the more important knowledge of the conditions of eternal salvation.

To be sure, it would never do to have religion taught by unqualified persons; for false religious ideas would create the tragic situation in which a person would suppose himself to be saved when in fact he had not correctly apprehended the divinely appointed means of salvation. Only schools in which the teachers shall be good Catholics can fulfil the highest purpose of education. Theology must be the queen of the sciences throughout the educational system.[1]

This loyalty to a theological interpretation of all reality explains also the Catholic theory of politics. It is felt that government ought to work in harmony with the religion which God has authorized. In our country, complete separation of the Church and State has come to prevail. The policies of our government are determined by the will of the citizens rather than by a religious authority over which they have no control. The Catholic conception of politics has been eloquently expressed by Pope Leo XIII in his famous encyclical entitled "The Christian Constitution of States." A few sentences from this may well be quoted here. Speaking of the principles of modern democracy, he said:

> The authority of God is passed over in silence, just as if there were no God; or as if He cared nothing for human society; or as if

[1] "The State is guilty of tyrannical usurpation against the Church, when it compels parents to send their children to neutral or mixed schools, condemned by the Church as hurtful to faith and morals. With certain restrictions Catholic parents are allowed to avail themselves of such schools though they are solemnly exhorted to everywhere build and maintain parochial schools where knowledge of religion and knowledge of letters keep equal pace together. Certainly, no Catholic can with a safe conscience help to the enactment of a law making the attendance of Catholic children at mixed or neutral schools obligatory" (O. A. Hill, *Ethics General and Special*, p. 350).

men, whether in their individual capacity or bound together in social relations, owed nothing to God; or as if there could be a government of which the whole origin and power and authority did not rest in God Himself. . . . . And since the populace is declared to contain within itself the springhead of all rights and all power, it follows that the State does not consider itself bound by any kind of duty towards God. Moreover, it believes that it is not obliged to make public profession of any religion; or to inquire which of the very many religions is the only one true; or to prefer one religion to all the rest; or to show any form of religion special favor; but on the contrary is bound to grant equal rights to every creed, so that the public order may not be disturbed by any particular form of religious belief. . . . .

Now when the State rests on foundations like those just named —and for the time they are greatly in favor—it readily appears into how unrightful a position the Church is driven. For when the management of public business is in harmony with doctrines of such a kind, the Catholic religion is allowed a standing in civil society equal only or inferior to societies alien from it; no regard is paid to the laws of the Church, and she who, by the order and commission of Jesus Christ, has the duty of teaching all nations, finds herself forbidden to take any part in the instruction of the people.[1]

Since all knowledge is to be theologically interpreted, and all political authority is to be referred to a divine source, Catholicism has a direct and simple way of relating religion to life. The Christian's personal attitude toward God should be extended to cover everything. The God who provides by revelation and grace for the salvation of men is the same God who established the authoritative Church, who inspired the writing of the Bible as the supreme expression of his mind and will, who providentially orders the universe which he created, and who alone can give enduring authority to the social and political institutions of men. An imposing general philosophy can

[1] *The Great Encyclical Letters of Pope Leo XIII* (3d ed.), pp. 120–22.

be elaborated on this theological foundation. And it all hangs together as long as one is applying only the test of logical consistency.

It is from this point of view that the Catholic judgment on Protestantism is to be understood. In defying the divine authority of the Catholic Church, Luther is held to have displayed a spirit of rebellion against God. Catholicism traces a logical sequence in which this rejection of the divine authority of the Church is the first step, followed by the rejection of divine authority in other realms, until the end is reached in the atheistic naturalism alleged to be so prevalent today. The only cure for the evils of modern life consists in returning to the all-inclusive theological philosophy of Catholicism. That men, after discovering for themselves the shallowness of non-Catholic movements, will ultimately return to the true Church is devoutly believed by all true Catholics. Since this is the providential purpose of God, it would be worse than foolish to contemplate any other outcome. Like adamant, the Catholic Church sets herself against any program which would detach from the Church's influence any aspects of individual or social life.

II

Such is the theological system underlying Catholicism. The officials of the Church are well schooled in its tenets. But the ordinary Catholic layman does not have either the time or the training to master so elaborate a system. What gives Catholicism its hold on its lay members?

The essentially theological philosophy which we have outlined above is made real for the masses by the Catholic system of worship. Here an abundance of sacred objects

helps to make real the sense of God. What philosophy does for Catholic thinking, the sacred objects do for the fixing of practical attitudes. The high altar occupies the central place at the front of the church; and the priests, delegated by divine power to administer worship, constantly suggest by word and gesture and posture the divine power connected with sacred objects. The climax of the service in the church is the celebration of the Mass, when, in response to the words of consecration by the priest, the bread and wine are miraculously transformed into the very body and blood of Christ. An intense feeling that one is in the sacred presence is engendered; and this feeling makes the worshiper especially sensitive to any irreverent or blasphemous conduct. Under the influence of this feeling, the Catholic is prepared to accept and to practice the kind of theological guidance involved in the Church system as a whole. By contrast, a Protestant service seems to depend upon argument and persuasion to induce people to believe in God.

This use of sacred objects has been generally characterized by Protestants as a form of superstition. But it is quite in harmony with the fundamental way of conceiving religion which we have already examined. Since the ultimate explanation of all reality is the creative will and power of God, religion should remind men constantly of God. Nothing can more successfully accomplish this than to confront them as frequently as possible with sacred objects. In the presence of these they are led to ask whether they are worthy to meet God, and are stimulated to take the necessary steps to remove all obstacles. The importance of this aspect of Catholicism in training the religious feeling is usually overlooked by Protestants.

The Catholic layman is far more concerned about his contact with sacred objects than he is about the theology of the Church. This latter may safely be left to the jurisdiction of the officials who understand it.

The divine presence is mediated supremely in the sacraments. These are specifically authorized channels of divine grace. They are like the sacred objects in that they powerfully suggest the reality of divine aid, but they are unique in that they were officially instituted by Christ to accomplish the salvation of men. To neglect the sacraments would be to turn away from the indispensable means of salvation.[1]

In this connection, attention may be called to the conception of original sin which underlies the Catholic teaching concerning salvation. According to this doctrine, men in their natural state are suffering from moral disability due to Adam's fall. Everyone is born with a moral taint which, if not eliminated, would debar him from participation in the blessings of God. "We are born enemies of God."[2] There is no possibility of a merely "natural" religion sufficient to save men, for the disabling taint can be eradicated only by supernatural power. The sacraments are thus indispensable to salvation.

The sacramental system is so planned as to cover the entire life of every Christian. First comes baptism, which is a sacrament of regeneration, eliminating the taint of original sin and entitling the baptized person to the ministrations of the Church. It is prerequisite to the other

[1] "A sacrament is a visible sign instituted by Christ, by which grace is conveyed to our souls. Three things are necessary to constitute a sacrament, viz., a visible sign, invisible grace, and institution by our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gibbons, *op. cit.*, p. 265).

[2] Gibbons, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

sacraments. For example, marriage, which is a sacrament according to Catholic teaching, can be rightly contracted only by persons who have been baptized.

Confirmation is the sacrament enabling children who reach the age of maturity to take a responsible membership in the Church, after they have been properly instructed in the meaning of such membership. It is an occasion of great rejoicing, admitting a child to its first Communion.

Penance is a sacrament intended to save persons who have sinned after their baptism. It involves confession to a priest and the performance of such deeds of penance as the priest shall impose. The priest declares absolution from the guilt of sins, but this absolution is to be effective only after the required penance has been performed. If the deeds of penance have not been completed at death, the sinner goes to purgatory, there to suffer discipline until released by God. The Catholic doctrine of the communion of the saints, however, affirms that the living and the dead are all members of one society in God's sight. The living, therefore, can benefit the dead by performing on their behalf deeds which would be counted as penance. Masses may be said for the dead. The sacrament of penance thus constitutes an effective way in which the Church keeps control of both living and dead.

The sacramental system culminates in the Eucharist. Here, after the words of consecration have been pronounced by the priest, the bread and the wine are transformed into the very body and blood of Christ. This miracle is the climax of the Mass and produces a profound realization of the divine presence close at hand. Those who have made their confession and are entitled to be

admitted to partake of the sacred wafer receive Christ into their life in very realistic fashion.[1]

The Catholic system of worship is thus admirably suited to give a practical reality-feeling to the conception of the divine institution which underlies Catholic theology. The worshiper is made keenly aware of his utter dependence on the grace of God for his salvation. The sacraments are efficacious because they were divinely instituted. A doctrine as difficult to explain as that of transubstantiation is held with perfect confidence because the authoritative word of the Church is reinforced by the emotional experience of the worshiper. If one asks how it is possible that the Holy Communion should look and taste like bread and yet not be bread at all, the answer is given in terms of a dialectic which seems to give logical consistency to the doctrine. It is asserted that the "substance" of the bread changes while the "accidents" (taste, appearance, chemical constitution, etc.) do not. The verbal distinction between "substance" and "accidents" is taken as if it were a real distinction.

Catholicism, then, is a form of religion which professes to be of divine authority and which therefore assumes the

[1] A little manual for children who are making their first Communion has the following statements: "The apostles were the first priests. Our Lord gave them the power to do what he had done. He gave them the power to change bread and wine into His Body and Blood. The priest is the only one who can change bread and wine into Our Lord's Body and Blood. When the priest puts Holy Communion on our tongues we know that we have Jesus. Holy Communion looks like bread; it tastes like bread. But it is not bread. It is Jesus. We cannot see Jesus because He is hidden there. But we know it is the same good Jesus who loved children long ago. He comes to us in Holy Communion. He comes right into our hearts. And so he wants our hearts to be very clean and good" (William R. Kelley, *Our First Communion*).

right to command men in the name of God. A good Catholic must believe what the Church tells him to believe, must repent of his sins under the direction of a father-confessor, and must conform to the ritual and sacramental requirements of the Church because there is no other divinely appointed way in which to be saved. Catholicism stands in contrast to all other forms of Christianity in the absoluteness of its doctrine of divine authority. From the Catholic point of view all other churches have been led astray through human pride or waywardness. Even when Protestants appeal to the divinely given and infallible Bible, they permit the vagaries of human interpretation to vitiate the message. An infallible revelation demands an infallible interpreter if it is to preserve its infallibility. Such an interpretation of truth and such an administration of the saving sacraments the Catholic Church believes herself divinely commissioned to uphold.

III

Catholicism is primarily a system of worship and of religious discipline under the direction of the authoritative Church. So far as the layman is concerned, "implicit" faith is all that is essential. That is, the ordinary Christian does not need *explicitly* to understand and to affirm all the doctrines of the Church. His willingness to assent to what the Church teaches suffices whether he fully understands that teaching or not.

This body of religious beliefs and practice is worked out by scholars, however, in explicit form. Catholic doctrine is carefully and minutely elaborated into an imposing system. The essentials of this theological system may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. *The doctrine of divine authority* sets forth the nature of the inspiration of Scriptures, and the authoritative character of the tradition which the Church conserves and transmits from generation to generation. On the basis of this exposition, all doctrines of the Church are announced as authoritative declarations.

2. *The doctrine of God* is especially impressive because the authority of the entire Catholic system rests on God's will. Religiously, therefore, God is pictured as back of all elements of cult or of belief. The elaborate discussion of the divine attributes and functions is not mere speculative philosophy. It serves to deepen and broaden the sense of reverent submission which is characteristic of Catholic piety. God—the absolutely perfect and omnipotent being—is the creator and sustainer of the universe and also the source of the religious system devised for man's salvation. The metaphysical discussions of the divine attributes and of the mystery of the Trinity serve to enhance the religious feeling of absolute dependence on God. The ultimate control of the universe, the special revelation in the Sacred Scriptures, and the authoritative establishment of the Catholic Church are all blended into one doctrine of God. Thus for Catholicism religious faith is not a specialized aspect of life alongside of other aspects. Faith in God interpenetrates all phases of thought and life.

3. *The doctrine of incarnation* links God's power and providence in an especial way to the world of human interests. Jesus Christ is defined primarily in terms of his eternal divine nature. His earthly life was the activity of God manifest in the flesh. The consciousness of Jesus is represented as an omniscient self-knowledge of his place

in the Catholic doctrine of redemption. Thus, under the direction of the Church, the reading of the Gospel story serves to enhance the authority of the Catholic system. Christ himself is believed to have taught this system. In the incarnation is the all-inclusive divine provision for the salvation of men. The work of Christ is effective because he is the God-man. A peculiar definiteness is given to the conception of God's saving grace. The death of Christ on the cross is the divinely appointed way in which atonement is made for the sins of men, and the cross becomes the symbol of divine power over evil. The "sign of the cross" has entered into popular religious practice as an almost magical protection against evil. The repetition of the incarnation in the miracle of the Mass, when the bread and wine are transmuted into visible evidences of the divine presence, keeps the Catholic religious consciousness in a mood reverently to submit to whatever the gracious God may ordain.

4. *The divine provision for man's salvation* which is so spectacularly exhibited in the doctrine of the incarnation, in the Mass, and in the representations of the crucifixion, is practically expressed in the doctrine of grace. Grace is the divine power and mercy embodied in means whereby man can secure his salvation. Grace is specifically available in the sacraments, which have an objective saving power. In manuals for the cultivation of the Christian life large space is given to a discussion of the sacraments. Since salvation is impossible save through the use of these divine means, the religious life of the Catholic is constantly under the suggested guidance of the inescapable power of God.

5. In the background of all practical piety is the

Catholic *doctrine of a future life.* That future life, like the present, is under the direct jurisdiction of God. In it the soul meets the inexorable righteous judgments of God. There is a place of bliss for those who meet with the approval of God and a place of eternal torment for those who have defied the divine government. These two ultimate destinies are so vividly portrayed in religious education and in preaching that they constitute a powerful incentive toward habits of thought and life. The present sojourn on earth is believed to be a period of probation, during which man prepares himself for his eternal destiny. The Catholic Church looms large in the thinking of Catholics because it alone possesses the knowledge and the means through which eternal bliss can be attained. The control of the Church over its members is secured to a considerable extent because of the fear of hell which exists in the minds of those who have been properly indoctrinated. Thus the essentially theological interpretation of this life is linked up with the theological interpretation of the life to come, and both interpretations presuppose that the power in control of the universe is the God who has revealed his will in the Scriptures and who administers his régime of grace through the Catholic Church.

Catholicism, then, may be characterized as a consistent *theological* interpretation of the world and of human life. The universe is accounted for in terms of the divine will. The same deity who created the universe gave the one authorized revelation of himself in the Bible and established the one true Church in which men may find sure salvation. There can be no real conflict between science and religion because the same God who created

the laws of nature revealed his will in the Bible. The miracles of the Bible are taken as facts exactly as the observations of the scientist are taken as facts. A true philosophy must include both. The teachings of the Church must be included along with the teachings of the Bible and the findings of the scientist. For the Catholic the problems of religious thinking are thus relatively simple. The theologian must devise a way in which the undoubted facts of human discovery may be combined with the unquestioned utterances of Scripture and of the Church so as to make the whole assume a logical consistency. The layman has simply to follow the directions of the Church.

It is instructive for Protestants to look closely at this imposing theological system. It furnishes absolute assurance to the one who accepts it. It has a way of harmonizing the findings of reason with the deliverances of revelation so as to produce a consistent philosophy. But the assurance and the consistency rest on the assumption that the power in control of the universe is identical with the God described in the Catholic system of worship. If this primary assumption be questioned, the Catholic solution is no longer possible. Protestantism questioned it; but Protestantism originally merely substituted the God of Protestant theology for the God of Catholic theology and assumed that the power in control of the universe was identical with the Protestant God. Catholicism has been able to maintain itself without serious theological difficulties because it has insisted on a system of education which instils into the minds of children the essential theological presupposition. Protestantism originally undertook to accomplish the same result for itself, but in recent years has

tolerated a kind of scholarship which makes no theological assumptions. The consequence is that Protestantism today faces problems of religious thinking which have never been permitted to enter into Catholicism. Protestants are honestly perplexed by the situation. Some advocate a return to the plan of ecclesiastically controlled education. Others advocate alterations of theology to correspond to the findings of non-ecclesiastical science. The real significance of the present perplexity of Protestantism, however, can be fully understood only against the background of the Catholicism from which Protestantism sprang.

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II

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROTESTANT REVOLT

Protestants have been accustomed to think that the Reformation marked the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of what we call the "modern world." It has often been taken for granted that Protestant Christianity could be depended upon to reinforce all forward-looking movements while Catholicism would inevitably be conservative. But Protestantism has been by no means a unified type of religion. There are many different types of Protestant belief. In the controversy now going on between modernists and fundamentalists each side contends that it is preserving the true spirit of Christianity. It is becoming more and more difficult to define the nature of Protestantism in such a way that all Protestants will assent. Before attempting to interpret significant forms of Protestantism, we must consider some salient facts.

In the first place it should be distinctly remembered that the Protestant movement took place while medieval thinking still ruled the minds of men. Descartes, who is often called the "father of modern philosophy," was born a century after Luther. Galileo, who so strikingly indicated the enormous value of the scientific method of discovering truth, was brought to trial for his heretical utterances in 1616, ninety-nine years after Luther posted his theses. During the days of Luther and of Calvin, religious thinking followed the methods which had been

worked out by the medieval scholars. The theology of Protestantism was thus discussed and shaped for a century in terms of medieval scholarship. Protestantism really belongs to the Middle Ages so far as its original theology is concerned.

The fundamental characteristic of the medieval way of thinking was the dominance of theological considerations. A "law of nature" was held to be simply a divinely ordained way in which things should behave. Political rulers were declared to owe their authority to God, and to God alone. Religious thinking consisted in accurately mastering what had been revealed by God in the Holy Scripture. Social relationships were organized in accordance with what was believed to be the divine ordinance. Wives were to obey their husbands, children were to honor their parents, servants were to be humbly loyal to their masters, because these attitudes were divinely enjoined. To recognize the theological origin of all truth and to accept what God had revealed was essential to respectability. A disbeliever was a social outcast. Early Protestantism shared with Catholicism the conviction that men ought to be compelled to submit to an authoritative religious system. Heretics were punished as a matter of course. The freedom of the individual to think religiously as he sees fit—a right which we readily grant today—was not dreamed of in Luther's day. Both Catholics and Protestants insisted that the divinely authorized system of truth should be made to prevail universally. They disagreed as to where divine authority was supremely located; but they agreed that the first duty of every man is to accept what God requires.

Taking a large view of the situation, the content of

Protestant belief has coincided for the most part with that of Catholicism. It was at first thought by many Protestants that Catholicism could perhaps be sufficiently reformed so that a reunion could take place. Melanchthon worked ardently to formulate a theology which might serve as the basis of such a reunion. The points of dispute were relatively few, but they were of such crucial spiritual significance that compromise proved impossible. Protestants believed that the Catholic Church had added to the undoubted requirements of God certain humanly devised regulations which corrupted true religion. Catholics held that Protestants, in refusing to acknowledge the absolute authority of the Church, were refusing to submit to a portion of God's will.

The all-important factor in the Protestant revolt was the rejection of the divine authority of the Church. This meant that Protestants claimed a knowledge of God's will which did not depend on the mediation of the Church. But even in this revolt, the emphasis was on *conformity to the will of God*. It is quite out of harmony with the temper of original Protestantism to represent it as concerned primarily for the freedom of the individual to determine his own religion. The new movement, like Catholicism, emphasized the supreme importance of submission to the will of God; it simply declared that each individual could discover that will without the intervention of the Church.

This meant that everyone was expected to go directly to the original revelation of God in the Bible, and there to discover what he ought to believe and what he ought to do in order to be saved. But Catholic doctrine also was avowedly derived mainly from the Bible. It would hardly be expected, then, that the content of Protestant doctrine

would depart in any large measure from Catholic standards.

As a matter of fact, the most important changes were those in which the control of the Church was involved. The great hold of Catholicism over men is through the sacramental system. If it be granted that men cannot be saved except through the grace given in the sacraments, and if the only valid administration of the sacraments is under church regulation, the entire system of church control is secured. If, however, the sacraments are not the prime essential, if men can conceivably be saved without ecclesiastically administered sacraments, the hold of the church is broken. The Lutheran reformation began with an attack on the administration of penance—one of the sacraments which conditioned the Christian's privilege of receiving other sacraments. Its logical end was the elimination of the sacramental system.

The natural and effective means of making this change was to appeal to the "genuine" will of God as over against what Catholics alleged to be the will of God. Can the authorization of the Catholic system of sacraments be clearly found in the Bible? Applying this test, five of the seven Roman Catholic sacraments were disallowed. The other two—baptism and the Lord's Supper—received a new interpretation believed to be in accordance with biblical teaching.

Original Protestantism, then, may be defined as a system in which the will of God is held to be immediately accessible to the individual without the need of any ecclesiastical interpreter, and the saving grace of God is held to be immediately available to the individual without the mediation of any priest. It is a divinely appointed

system without any divinely authorized institution of control. God is believed to deal with men individually and directly. The Bible, as the Word of God to be interpreted by each individual for himself, is the supreme and all-sufficient source of theology.

In theory Protestantism, like Catholicism, conceived Christianity as the absolutely perfect religion. Thus it too has cherished the word "infallible." But Catholicism, as we have seen, elaborated this conception of infallibility so that at no place can the private judgment of any human being stand against an official declaration of the Church. The Church guarantees the doctrine of biblical inspiration. The Church fixes the limits of the biblical canon. The Church tells Christians what the Bible really teaches.

Now Protestantism eliminated the entire realm of church control. If, then, we ask how we are sure that the Bible is divinely inspired, or how we may know precisely which books are canonical and which are not, or how we may be absolutely certain what doctrines the Bible teaches, we face the crucial question for Protestantism. There has never been any one solution of this problem. It remains to this day a fruitful source of divisions. A brief glance at some of the proposed solutions will bring us face to face with perplexities which vex religious thinking down to our own day.

The theory most consistent with the original genius of Protestantism was the doctrine of the "inner testimony of the Holy Spirit." Protestantism insisted on the immediate and direct relationship between the believer and God, while Catholicism insisted on the necessary mediation of the divinely authorized Church. If now, the guarantees furnished by the Church are invalid, where shall

the Protestant turn? Luther and Calvin both declared that the Holy Spirit would directly testify in the heart of each believer. Catholicism had virtually restricted the authentic guidance of the Spirit to the officials who were empowered to be the successors of the apostles. Protestantism gave to every individual Christian immediate access to the Word of God. It is the inwardly apprehended testimony of the Holy Spirit which directly assures the believer that the Bible is the Word of God and which guides the reader of the Bible to a correct understanding of what he reads. This theory of immediate divine direction is clearly and eloquently expressed by Calvin. Said he:

> Who can assure us that God is the author of the Scriptures? . . . . Who can persuade us that this book ought to be received with reverence, and that one expunged from the sacred number, unless all these things were determined by the decisions of the Church? . . . . But if this be true, what will be the condition of the wretched consciences, which are seeking a solid assurance of eternal life, if all the promises extant concerning it rest only on the judgment of men? [For Calvin, the voice of the church represented only the fallible judgment of the men who presumed to voice the decisions of the church.] . . . . It must be maintained that we are not established in the belief of the doctrine until we are indubitably persuaded that God is its author. . . . . Now if we wish to consult the true interest of our consciences; that they may not be unstable and wavering, the subjects of perpetual doubt . . . . this persuasion must be sought from a higher source than human reasons, or judgments, or conjectures . . . . even from the secret testimony of the Spirit. . . . . The testimony of the Spirit is superior to all reason. For, as God alone is a sufficient witness of himself in his own word, so also the word will never gain credit in the hearts of men, till it be confirmed by the internal testimony of the Spirit. It is necessary, then, that the same Spirit, who spake by the mouths of the prophets, should penetrate into our hearts, to convince us that they faithfully delivered the oracles which were divinely intrusted to them. . . . .

Therefore, being illumined by the Spirit, we now believe the divine original of the Scripture, not from our own judgment or that of others, but we esteem the certainty that we have received it from God's own mouth by the ministry of men to be superior to any human judgment, and equal to that of an intuitive perception of God himself in it.[1]

In effect this theory gives to every Christian the same immediate divine guidance that Catholic doctrine gives to the pope. But the practical application of the theory is very difficult. There is only one pope. He can always agree with himself. But there are innumerable Protestants. Infallibility would require that all true interpretations of infallible truth should agree. The guidance of the Holy Spirit, if that guidance be genuine, should lead all men possessing the Spirit to agree in their utterances. As a matter of fact, Christians do not always agree. In such a case, who is right? If you and I differ in our convictions concerning biblical revelation, it is somewhat presumptuous for me to claim an infallibility which I deny to you on the ground that I possess the Holy Spirit while you are misguided.

The Reformers themselves soon saw the difficulty of appealing to this doctrine. Luther felt that the Zwinglians, when they could not assent to his position, were possessed of a "different Spirit." When more radical minds, like Carlstadt, pressed the appeal to the Spirit so far as to overshadow more objective control, it was clearly seen that if every man were to be permitted to judge for himself whether he was acting under the guidance of the Spirit, intolerable confusion would result. It is a noteworthy fact that in Protestant orthodoxy the appeal to

[1] *Institutes*, Bk. I, chap. vii.

the Spirit has been made quite subordinate and that more objective tests have been employed. For the most part the direct appeal to the Spirit has been made by sects regarded as eccentric and extravagant.

A second way in which the validity of Christian truth was sought was in Luther's proposal that such truth must effectively "preach Christ" (*was Christum treibt*). Since salvation is through Christ, and since the task of theology is to set forth God's salvation, doctrines must always be of such a character as to bring into the foreground the divine revelation made through Christ. Here we have a *qualitative* test, which, if rigorously applied, has revolutionary consequences. Luther himself suggested such consequences in the much-quoted utterance in his *Introduction to the New Testament*, where he said:

> Christ is the Master, the Scriptures are the servant. Here is the true touchstone for testing all the books: we must see whether they work the works of Christ or not. The book which does not preach Christ is not apostolic, were St. Peter or St. Paul its writer. On the other hand the book which preaches Christ is apostolic, were its author Judas, Annas, Pilate, or Herod.

Translated into modern terms, this proposed test of Luther's is an appeal to *experienced values* as the norm of religious thinking. Strictly applied, this appeal would make it a matter of indifference where a given utterance came from. The *quality* of the utterance would be the important thing about it. There might be material in the Bible which would not stand this test, and there might be material outside the canon which would meet the qualitative requirements. Such a radical position, however, would destroy the absolute authority of the Bible and

thus weaken the Protestant defense, which charged Catholic theologians with having added to biblical teachings ideas and practices derived from other sources. Protestantism soon ceased to make any such rash suggestions as those implied in this utterance of Luther, and settled back to the more objective position of dependence on the divine authority of Scriptures as such.

The third answer to the questions which have been raised was formulated in the doctrine of the high inspiration of the Bible. This is really simply a repetition of the doctrine of the Catholic Church, which declares that the books of the Bible are authoritative "because, having been written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost they have God for their author."[1] The authority of the Bible rests, then, upon a *doctrine* of biblical infallibility. Protestant orthodoxy came to take this position.

But how do we know that this doctrine is correct? For the Catholic it is guaranteed by the Church. The Protestant is compelled to demonstrate it. The theory of biblical infallibility thus depends ultimately on precisely that exercise of human reason which Calvin was trying to eliminate when he formulated the doctrine of the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit. Human reason is admittedly fallible. If genuine infallibility is to be maintained, the doctrine of the authority of Scripture must not be left to the uncertainties of human conjecture. God himself must guarantee that authority. Roman Catholicism declares that God has guaranteed the Scriptures through the voice of the divinely established Church. Calvin attempted to secure the same divine guaranty through the testimony

[1] *Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council, Session III*, chap. ii. See Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, II, 242.

of the Spirit in the soul of the individual believer. But Protestant orthodoxy found this appeal to be too subjective and undertook to assert the doctrine of biblical infallibility as an a priori fact. Valiant attempts have been made to derive this doctrine from Scripture itself, but unfortunately the declarations in the Bible are not explicit enough to meet all difficulties.

In our own day the vulnerability of this procedure is becoming evident. In rejecting the authority of the Church, Protestantism insisted on the right of every individual to interpret the Bible for himself. Modern biblical scholars are exercising that right and have discovered that as a matter of fact the Bible is not infallible. But if this conclusion be admitted, the theological method of Protestant orthodoxy must be radically revised. The most important cleavage in Protestantism today is not to be found in the denominational distinctions. It is rather between those who want to retain the orthodox method of appeal to biblical authority and those who recognize that such an appeal is unsatisfactory when once the facts concerning the Bible are frankly recognized.

The present controversy between fundamentalists and modernists arises out of this very instability of the Protestant conception of the place of the Bible in Christianity. As we shall see later, Catholicism is so organized that modernism can be quickly declared to be incompatible with the genius of "true" Christianity. In Protestantism, however, it is always legitimate for any individual to dissent from the opinion of another individual or even from the collective opinion of a Protestant group. When modernists in Catholicism dissent from the orthodox doctrine of scriptural infallibility, they are defying the divine au-

thority of the Church; in Protestantism they are simply disagreeing with the opinions of men who are no more authoritative then they are themselves. The fundamentalists, however, assume that such dissent means the rejection of divine authority. In this judgment they are continuing the theological attitude characteristic of both Catholicism and Protestant orthodoxy.[1]

The essentials of Protestant orthodoxy may be compared with those of Roman Catholicism in the following summary:

1. Both Catholicism and Protestantism started with a theological interpretation of the world. The universe is what it is because of God's original creative work, and the creator of the universe is regarded as identical with the God of the ecclesiastical system. The modern evolutionary conception has caused difficulties for both theologies.

2. Both Catholicism and Protestant orthodoxy employed a theological explanation of social institutions. Political authority was by both grounded in God's ordinance. The family was explained in terms of divine regulations. Industrial relations were expounded on the basis of divine provisions. There was thus a close relationship between social or political theories and the teachings of the Bible. For example, both Catholicism and Protestant orthodoxy undertake to regulate marriage in accordance with theological principles.

3. Both Catholicism and Protestant orthodoxy held that God has revealed his will in complete and all-suffi-

[1] Professor Machen, one of the foremost spokesmen for the fundamentalists, frankly declares that he feels a closer kinship with Roman Catholics (who accept the principle of appeal to dogmatic authority) than with modernists (who dissent from this principle). See *Christianity and Liberalism*, pp. 48 ff.

cent fashion in definitely prescribed channels (the Bible and the Church for Catholicism; the Bible alone for Protestantism). All human judgments must conform to the divine norm given in revelation.

4. Both Catholicism and Protestant orthodoxy constructed their practical theology on the basis of the doctrine of man's innate corruption. Man cannot by the exercise of his merely "natural" powers attain to that goodness which entitles him to the divine approval. He is dependent on the special exercise of divine grace for his salvation.

5. Both Catholicism and Protestant orthodoxy held that the provisions of divine grace, by virtue of which man may be saved, have been provided exclusively by the work of Christ. Central in this work is his atoning death. But Catholicism holds that the benefits of this atonement are available only through the Church, while Protestantism declared that they are available directly to any individual who has faith.

6. Both Catholicism and Protestant orthodoxy regarded this life as a probationary period to prepare men for the judgment which determines destiny in the eternal realm. Heaven and hell await the righteous and the wicked respectively. Catholicism extends the discipline of the Church to Purgatory, providing that living persons, through the Church, may assist the dead to become worthy of admission to heaven. Protestantism rejected the doctrine of Purgatory along with the system of penance with which it was connected.

7. Both Catholicism and Protestant orthodoxy insisted on the necessity of sacraments because these were divinely prescribed in the plan of salvation. Catholicism

pictures the sacraments as the actual channels of divine grace; while Protestantism regarded them as auxiliary to faith and valuable in so far as they reinforce faith. But in both branches of Christianity great importance has been attached to such questions as the validity of ordination, the legitimacy of forms of baptism, and the conditions on which Christians are to be admitted to partake of the Lord's Supper. With minor exceptions the Protestant bodies have usually demanded conformity to what was believed to be the divinely prescribed use of the sacraments.

In short, the differences between Catholicism and Protestant orthodoxy are much less significant than the differences between orthodoxy and modernism. Modern Protestantism is in a confused state because the word "Protestant" covers such wide differences. Unification of these various Protestant views could be secured only in one of two ways. The first way, adopted by the fundamentalists, would be to require conformity to certain prescribed standards. This is also the Catholic program. The second way would be to recognize that the Protestant principle of the direct responsibility of the individual believer is incompatible with uniformity of belief. Protestants would in that case be held together by a program of voluntary co-operation on the part of individuals who represent diverse theological opinions but who respect the right of everyone to think for himself.

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III

MODERNISM

The most important theological controversy today is concerned with what has come to be called "modernism." In virtually every Christian denomination critical scholarship has compelled a re-examination of theological doctrines which were formerly believed to have been authoritatively settled. In order to understand the significance of current religious thinking, it is important to ask what modernism is and why it should be playing so crucial a part in present-day discussion.

For purposes of convenience we may contrast Catholicism and Protestantism alike with modernism by recalling that they both embody essentially medieval ways of thinking. Catholic theology employed the speculative methods inherited from Greek philosophy, and Protestantism arose a century before Galileo demonstrated the value of modern scientific inquiry. Moreover, both Catholicism and Protestantism presupposed that Christian doctrine had been officially formulated in antiquity and that theologians of all ages were under obligation to conform to the divine pattern. Each church defended its views by appealing to the Word of God. The doctrines believed to be taught in the Bible were reinforced by philosophical considerations which seemed to justify what Christians were under obligation to believe.

From the point of view of this older theology, if the exercise of independent thought leads one into conflict

with the authoritative system, this thought is regarded as sin. It means a wilful refusal to submit to the divine will. Heresy and dissent were formerly considered wicked. The Catholic Church regarded Luther as a rebel against the divinely established system. The Church of England down to our own day has generally looked upon dissenters as unworthy of full recognition as Christians, since they are not conforming to the divinely ordained requirements for true Christianity. Both Catholics and Protestants originally expressed vigorous condemnation of those who were advocating the Copernican astronomy, usually basing this condemnation on the accusation that the new astronomers were refusing to acknowledge what the Bible teaches concerning the physical universe. In exactly the same way in more recent times scholars who set forth new theological views have been accused of "rejecting" the Bible and have been regarded as traitors.

There was, however, one modernist factor in the Protestant Reformation. It encouraged individuals to defy an established church in the name of conscience. Such defiance was branded as sinful by Catholic theology. Although Protestant orthodoxy also tried to enforce uniformity of belief, ecclesiastical discipline in Protestantism was greatly weakened by the acknowledged right of the individual to dissent from a church which he believed to be corrupt. It was as justifiable a procedure to defy a Protestant church when it was wrong as to defy the Roman Church. Catholicism, as we shall see, has been able to deal summarily with modernism. Protestantism is far less able to suppress it.

The first realm in which emancipation from authoritative theological control was achieved was in the field of

politics. Protestantism at first established state churches, to which all good citizens were expected to be loyal. In England, however, two Protestant bodies, nearly equal in strength, were striving to capture the State so as to legitimatize a single type of theology and polity. Neither could prevail. Out of the struggle came the eventual recognition of the principle that national loyalty must not be confused with theological opinion. When John Knox in Scotland challenged Queen Mary in the name of the Bible and insisted that unless she conformed to the Scriptures she had no religious jurisdiction, the doctrine of the immediate divine right of a ruler vanished. The political struggles in England, involving the execution of Charles I in spite of his claims to divine right, and eventuating in the revolution by which the English people deliberately ended the Stuart line of monarchs by act of Parliament, meant the complete discrediting of the medieval conception of political authority. The Constitution of the United States and the French Revolution definitely established non-theological governments resting on purely secular grounds. In all these changes, coming to fruition in modern democracies, medieval-minded persons have been consistently opposed to the new movement. For it completely eliminates the appeal to theological standards. The older habits of thought still persist in certain expressions, such as the idea of a "Christian Nation"; but few of those who use this phrase in America would desire to have the government interfere with Jews or with other non-Christians in their full rights of worship. Religious conformity has disappeared from our political life. When people enjoy and approve complete liberty of religious thinking so far as the government is concerned, they are

likely to view with some degree of approval a similar policy of freedom within the limits of any religious body.

A second movement of great influence has been the development of scientific methods of reaching conclusions. The scientific investigator must be free to criticize adversely any commonly accepted theory if he believes that it is not in accord with the facts. No objection to such criticism is raised where the ideas to be criticized have not been incorporated into a system requiring allegiance. But whenever they have been made part and parcel of a system which is emotionally supported as an act of fidelity, criticism is fraught with difficulty and danger.

The so-called "warfare between science and theology" has been dramatically developed because of controversies over a few theories where religious feelings were involved. By far the greatest amount of scientific investigation has been carried on quietly without arousing any serious opposition. People accept and use a host of modern scientific inventions and adopt as part of their culture a wide range of scientific conclusions without ever having religious questions raised. They are becoming to an increasing extent accustomed to thinking in terms of scientific procedure and are more and more taking it for granted that those who explore the secrets of nature should be entirely free from ecclesiastical restrictions.

In certain realms, however, scientific conclusions have come into conflict with established theological doctrines. The controversy over the Copernican astronomy was the first great dramatic battle. The attempt was made to require the new scientists to conform to traditional theological teaching. The outcome of that conflict should be

well weighed by those who are today attempting to establish a similar theological control over certain modern scientific theories. In the case of Copernican astronomy scientific method won a complete victory. So complete was it that those who are still trying to continue a semblance of theological authority have adopted the questionable policy of "interpreting" biblical texts so as to make them seem to teach what modern astronomers have discovered. It is then claimed that the biblical writers anticipated modern scientists in the discovery of the truth. Such a procedure, however, discredits the theologians very completely. If they could not even read the Bible correctly, but had to wait until modern scientists discovered the truth before they themselves were able to discern it in the Scriptures, no one will listen to them very confidently when they assume to guide thinking with reference to issues now under debate.

The fact is that the modern world has ceased to look to the theologians for its interpretation of nature. Astronomers, geologists, biologists, bacteriologists, chemists, and physicists are shaping the ideas of men today concerning nature. When we ask why the world is what it is, we no longer refer to vague and general "laws of nature" originally ordained by God. We demand a precise account of the history of the phenomena in question, so that we may know how things came to be as they are. The origin and history of the earth and of man are treated today in accordance with scientific rather than theological procedure.[1]

[1] The difference between the theological and the scientific method of explanation was strikingly brought to my attention on one occasion when I was coming from southern California to the East. A young man

Another factor of great importance is the development of critical historical method in the study of religion. The Protestant Reformation made it evident that conscientious Christians might be mistaken. There were honest Catholics, who held to doctrines which would not stand the test of such criticism as non-Catholics wished to apply. The separation of Protestants into denominations with differing tenets meant that some of these denominations must be mistaken in their interpretations. There thus arose a strong impetus toward a more accurate study of the Bible and of the history of the church.

This desire to know more precisely the truth concerning the Bible has developed into the highly specialized technique of critical biblical interpretation. For more than a century, scholars have been engaged in the minute investigation of biblical questions. As is always to be expected when such carefully exact inquiry is pursued, facts have been brought to light which had been overlooked or which had been inaccessible when the dogmatic theories concerning the Bible were formulated. It has been discovered that the Bible is not at all the kind of book which it was assumed to be by both Catholicism and Protestant orthodoxy. Biblical scholars today are generally agreed that the writings of the Bible were composed by men who had in mind certain religious problems current in their

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on the train was greatly impressed by the desert. I had been recalling to myself what I remembered of the physical history of the continent and had accounted for the desert in terms of physical evolution. He, however, was puzzled to know why God had created so large an extent of apparently useless territory. Finally he said: "Anyway, it must have been created for some good purpose." It would be interesting to know how many transcontinental passengers ever think of demanding theological explanations for what they see.

own day. What they said was intended to meet those specific problems. That they were not omniscient is abundantly evident from the expressions of perplexity which they frankly utter. Even if the suggestions which they made had been infallibly perfect for the people for whom they were speaking, that very infallibility would have demanded certain local applications to conditions which have long since passed away. Even the most conservative biblical interpreters admit the existence of different "dispensations" in the history of religion and frankly say that the specific provisions made for an earlier dispensation may be eliminated or disregarded in a later one. The inevitableness of historical evolution is thus admitted by everyone.

If, now, it be recognized that there was progress in biblical religion, if the religious tenets of the early stages of the history of Israel are modified, or even superseded by later religious teachers, it is clear that biblical precepts cannot be rightly interpreted unless they are fitted into the historical circumstances to which they originally applied. When so interpreted, some of the biblical teachings are seen to have only historical significance. For example, the modern Christian church no longer faces the specific question which was so important to the Apostle Paul in the letter to the Galatians. It requires considerable rather difficult historical orientation in order to understand precisely why the apostle felt so intensely about the matter of circumcision.

As the linguistic, archaeological, and historical equipment for critical interpretation becomes more and more elaborate, biblical scholarship comes to be an increasingly complex and technical matter. So specialized is it that

even the professors in non-biblical departments of a modern divinity school know themselves to be amateurs. To an increasing extent they cease to rest their conclusions in their own fields on biblical foundations. For, in the first place, they do not feel competent to declare precisely what the correct interpretation of the Bible is; and in the second place they know that the scope of biblical religion is not identical with that of modern religion. There are some issues discussed in the Bible, such as the details of ancient ritual, which are no longer issues for living people; and there are some modern issues (such as the Christian's attitude toward the evolutionary hypothesis) which are not discussed in the Bible.

The result of this recently acquired knowledge concerning the Bible has been to set religious thinking to a considerable extent free from the requirement to conform to biblical norms. The modernist clearly recognizes this outcome of biblical scholarship. To be sure, he would be the last to deny the religious suggestiveness of that great literature. He is active in promoting what he believes to be a more intelligent way of studying the Bible. But the modernist has generally abandoned the attempt to find the final justification for a belief by citation of a scriptural passage.

The same kind of exact scholarship which has disclosed the fact of historical evolution in biblical religion has also made us aware of the importance of historical development in Christianity during the centuries since Bible times. For example, it is now realized that when the Christian movement passed from its original Jewish home in Palestine to the Graeco-Roman world around the Mediterranean, a most interesting development of religious

ideas and practices took place. The Christianity which emerged with its Catholic ecclesiastical organization and its Nicene theology was the creation of living persons in that ancient world rather than the mere repetition of a biblical pattern. It is true that we today see in this development much that seems to us to indicate a "corruption" of Christianity by pagan ideas. Nevertheless there is also much that is still valued by us which owes its origin to the impact of Hellenistic thinking. We are coming to see that original Christianity was radically transformed by the influence of the new environment. Strictly speaking, the doctrine of the Trinity—a doctrine which has usually been regarded as the most important "Christian" dogma—is a doctrine which grew up in order to solve peculiarly Hellenistic problems—problems which would have been unintelligible to the Christians of New Testament times. The key-words of the Nicene formula are not New Testament words at all.

If now it is recognized that the Christianity of the first three centuries made changes in theology, developed new formulas in which to express living faith, and succeeded so well that the Christian church has gladly carried the Hellenistic contribution down through the ages as a definitely "Christian" heritage, the question arises why modern men have not the right to do precisely what Christians in the first three centuries did. Palestinian religious thinking, employing Jewish theological ideas, could never have conquered the Hellenistic world. The triumph of Christianity in the ancient world was due to the fact that religious leaders employed positively the modes of thinking then prevalent. The modernist argues that if Christianity is to have a dominant place in modern culture it must

creatively employ the modes of thinking native to that culture.

Modernism, then, may be defined as the attempt to interpret religious beliefs in such a way as to bring modern ideas into the service of religion.[1] The modernist believes in the evolution of religion and in the historical development of Christianity. He is entirely willing to make changes in traditional doctrine if such changes serve to make religion more vital in the life and thought of his day.

In this willingness to contemplate possible changes of doctrine, we find the most essential difference between the modernist and the conservative. As we have seen, the prevailing belief both in Catholicism and in Protestantism has been the theory that Christianity was officially authorized by divine ordinance. This being the case, no man has any right to alter the divine enactment. Catholicism finds the ultimate test of doctrine in conformity to what the Church declares to have been originally authorized as apostolic. Protestantism has found its test by asking whether a given doctrine was taught authoritatively in the Bible. In both cases the preference of any given generation of men for this or that mode of thought must be subordinated to the duty of conforming to what is divinely authorized. Modernism, however, is primarily interested not in ascertaining whether a doctrine was originally authorized but rather in discovering whether it is vitally believable by modern men.

The primary question for the fundamentalist, as for

[1] Catholic modernists defined the movement as "an attitude which we consider to be simply that of Christians and Catholics who live in harmony with the spirit of their day" (*The Programme of Modernism* [New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908], p. 1, n.).

the Roman Catholic, is the question of authority. The foremost article in the fundamentalist's creed is the infallibility of Scripture. The modernist, on the other hand, is not interested in this problem. He wants to discover what interpretation of religion is inherently convincing. He is consequently regarded by the fundamentalist as an irresponsible free lance. It is hard for the fundamentalist, who is conscious of a profound consecration to the duty of obedience to divine authority, to regard this insistence on freedom as the expression of a religious spirit. Where, he asks, can there be any consecration if one demands the liberty to play fast and loose with authority.

It must be recognized that the modernist does not find it as easy as the fundamentalist to define the object of his consecration. Loyalty to the "truth" is rather vague, so long as no particular content of truth is specified. The fundamentalist can draw up a definite creed and declare that here is the sum and substance of his Christianity. The modernist is reluctant to formulate a creed, since such formulation would imply devotion to certain particular doctrines rather than to the total attitude of sincere inquiry which gives to the doctrines their spiritual value. This attitude of the modernist gives the movement a reputation for vagueness. Moreover, many modernists are still in the process of rethinking their religious beliefs. They are not ready to give a final formulation. Indeed, the very process of inquiry and of revision has in itself a religious value. There is a thrill which accompanies the discovery of truth which seems very precious to the modernist in contrast with the somewhat tame security due to the repetition of authoritative or conventionally approved truth. Modernism cannot be defined in terms of a creed

which all modernists will accept. It represents rather a spirit of open-minded inquiry and a willingness to make such modifications of traditional theology as are required by a fuller knowledge of the facts.

With all of its open-mindedness, the modernist movement is distinguished from radicalism by its positive adherence to historical Christianity. The modernist is constantly being invited to leave the church to which he belongs on the ground that he no longer accepts what the church expects her members to profess. But this invitation is for the most part unheeded. The modernist believes that the historical doctrines of the church represent the creative thinking of devout men who correlated religious beliefs with the culture of their day. The purpose of ancient beliefs can be heartily approved, even if the content of these beliefs has to be revised in the light of more exact knowledge.

Preserving, as it does, this continuity with a past which it undertakes to revise, modernism inevitably is a somewhat complex movement. Different representatives of the modernist spirit will differ in their attitude toward various items of the tradition of the church. There will be differences in the degree to which ancient forms are held sacred. The typical problems of modernism are thus expressions of a desire to be at the same time loyal to the past and creatively constructive for the future. Some of these problems will be specifically treated in later chapters.

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IV

HOW THE CATHOLIC CHURCH DEALT WITH MODERNISM

During the latter years of the nineteenth century several able scholars within the Catholic Church had adopted critical methods of biblical study and were setting forth interpretations of biblical history at variance with the traditional exposition. The word "modernism" was employed by officials in the Catholic Church to depreciate these modern ways of interpreting the Bible and the history of the Church.

Pope Leo XIII attempted to deal with this movement with that statesmanship so characteristic of his reign and appointed a biblical commission in 1902 to deal with the whole matter and to make recommendations as to what kind of biblical interpretation is in accordance with Catholic principles. Meanwhile the work of a brilliant French Catholic scholar, Loisy, was attracting widespread attention and was countenancing a kind of liberalism quite incompatible with the doctrine of biblical and ecclesiastical infallibility. In 1903 Pope Leo XIII died and was succeeded by Pope Pius X who almost at once set himself to the task of purifying Catholicism from all compromising movements. Loisy's books were condemned, and Loisy himself was required to submit to the voice of the Church. The story of this struggle has been vividly told in Loisy's *My Duel with the Vatican.* Here we have an unusually frank analysis of the dilemma pre-

sented to one who loves his Church and desires to be a spiritual leader in it but who finds himself confronted with the demand that he assent to doctrines which he considers indefensible in the light of what scholars know.

Finally, in 1907 the Pope issued the now famous encyclical letter against modernism. Promptly an anonymous group of modernists replied to this official document. The encyclical and this reply have been translated into English and bound in one volume.[1] The two together furnish perhaps the very best introduction to the issue raised by modernism. The Catholic controversy throws much light on some of the things that are occurring in Protestantism today.

The encyclical of the Pope is an admirably frank interpretation of Christianity from the point of view of authoritarianism. It presents Christianity as a divinely authorized system of beliefs and practice, committed to the Catholic Church for preservation and administration. The Pope begins his encyclical with the words:

> One of the primary obligations assigned by Christ to the office divinely committed to us of feeding the Lord's flock is that of guarding with the greatest vigilance the deposit of faith delivered to the saints, rejecting the profane novelties of words and the gainsaying of knowledge falsely so-called.[2]

The modernist issue is thus defined as a conflict between authorized views and those which are unauthorized. The duty of the Church is simple and plain. It consists in declaring clearly what all good Catholics are authoritatively required to believe. Ideas diverging from this authorized system are worthy of condemnation just because

[1] *The Programme of Modernism* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908).

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 149.

they diverge. It is interesting to note the phrases by which the modernists are characterized in this letter. They are called "enemies of the Cross of Christ," "partisans of error," "enemies of the Church, lost to all sense of modesty," "the most pernicious of all the adversaries of the Church," etc. The peculiarly desperate character of these innovators in doctrine is shown by the cleverness with which they insist on remaining within the Church in order to bore from within and weaken the structure of ecclesiastical authority.

> They put into operation their designs for her [the Church's] undoing, not from without, but from within. . . . . To this must be added the fact, which is indeed well calculated to deceive souls, that they lead a life of the greatest activity, of assiduous and ardent application to every branch of learning, and that they possess as a rule a reputation for irreproachable morality. Finally, there is the fact which is all but fatal to the hope of cure that their very doctrines have given such a bent to their minds, that they disdain all authority and brook no restraint; and relying upon a false conscience, they attempt to ascribe to a love of truth that which is in reality the result of pride and obstinacy.[1]

The papal encyclical, having thus indicated clearly that the primary fault of the modernist is his wilful refusal to allow his opinions to be determined for him by the Church, then proceeds with almost pathetic earnestness to attempt to analyze the modernist position. The most striking thing about this analysis is its portrayal of the workings of the ecclesiastical mind. It shows no feeling for the moral compulsion of scientifically ascertained facts. It assumes that sinful pride and a desire for notoriety are the chief motives actuating modernists. The modernist reply calls attention to this and painstakingly

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 151-52.

indicates that the conclusions which the Pope condemns are built upon carefully ascertained facts. The papal encyclical, however, attempts to account for the modernist ideas by searching for some a priori notions from which the objectionable conclusions are reached. We have in the encyclical an excellent example of the pre-scientific method of speculation. The Pope assumes that modernist conclusions arise because, in the place of an acceptance of the authority of the Church, modernists have accepted an agnostic philosophy, turning away from a supernatural to a merely natural interpretation of events. It is what the Protestant fundamentalists are accustomed to call an "anti-supernaturalistic bias." "Finally, the Modernists, losing all sense of control, go so far as to proclaim as true and legitimate whatever is explained by life."[1]

We are not concerned here to go into the details of the papal condemnation. Suffice it to say that the modernist reply declines to admit the Catholic interpretation of either method or motives. It insists that instead of being dominated by an a priori philosophy, the modernists are fundamentally concerned with critically exact methods of discovering the truth. The document sets forth with great detail the consequences of the critical study of the Bible and of the Church, and shows clearly how and why the indubitable facts lead to a revised conception of Christianity.

The real issue is thus clearly defined. Shall a Christian's conclusions be determined for him by authority? or shall his conclusions rest on free inquiry as to the facts?

It is immediately evident what would occur if the second of these possibilities were to be admitted. The con-

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 209.

trol of the Church would be ended. Critical processes of scholarship rather than the dogmatic decrees of the Church would be supreme. Moreover, since scholars do not all agree in their conclusions, it would be difficult to enforce an uniform content of belief. Varieties of personal conviction would have to be tolerated. This, however, would mean the end of the Catholic Church.

Thus the policy of Catholicism toward modernism is entirely consistent. It could not adopt any other course without abandoning all its claims. It cannot submit the issue between it and the modernists to debate; for this would tacitly recognize human reason as the ultimate arbiter. If it should be clearly shown that the Bible as a matter of fact is not infallible and that the Church is a historical evolution rather than a divinely established institution, Catholicism would be worsted. *The Church resting on authority has only one course open. It must insist on subjection to authority.* For authority is not authority at all unless it is obeyed.

The Catholic method of dealing with modernism is thus clear. The encyclical shows that the views of the modernists are not in accord with what the Church teaches. It defines modernism as "the synthesis of all heresies."[1] From the Catholic point of view a heresy is the expression of a mind unwilling to submit to the authority of the Church. The Church's duty is clear; it must discredit the heresy and prevent the heretics from influencing others. The two tasks are really intermingled, for an effective discrediting of heresy would limit its influence. Few people care to be known as followers of a discredited movement.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 214.

The encyclical, therefore, puts modernism in as unfavorable a light as possible. As we have already shown, the argument is constantly enlivened by descriptive phrases intended to portray modernists as persons actuated by unworthy motives. The conclusions to which modernists have been led by their critical research are set forth in such a way as to show their "destructive" aspects—destructive of Catholic faith. The appeal to experience as over against authority is regarded as a purely subjective test. "On what grounds can Modernists deny the truth of an experience affirmed by a follower of Islam?"[1] When they attempt to substitute for the official interpretation of Christian history an interpretation based on critical principles, their procedure is disposed of by saying: "From beginning to end everything in it is *a priori*, and an apriorism that reeks of heresy."[2] Their application of critical principles to the study of the Bible is declared to rest upon "a philosophy borrowed from the negation of God, and a criterion which consists of themselves."[3] Their persistence in remaining within the Catholic Church in spite of the demonstrated departures which they have made from Catholic doctrines is said to be the expression of a hypocritical plan to pretend to be good Catholics in order that they may have better opportunities for corrupting the faith of others.[4] Their adverse cricitism of certain aspects of the official Catholic system is characterized by saying: "They continuously and openly rebuke the Church on the ground that she resolutely refuses to submit and accommodate her doctrines to their opinions of philosophy; while they on

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 169.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 202.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 204.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 194.

their side, having blotted out the old theology, endeavor to introduce a new theology which shall support the aberrations of the philosophers."[1]

Thus from the papal encyclical one would gain the impression that the modernists were somewhat vain persons, eager to be in the limelight, thrusting to the front new and doubtful theories which are actually subversive of faith but which the modernists, either because of self-delusion or because they are craving notoriety, represent to be a purer form of Christianity than that system which Christ authoritatively committed to his Church. The total effect of the encyclical would be to discredit the ability and the motives of the modernists.

But merely to argue against the movement does not dispose of it. So long as modernists remain within the Church, they will be certain to spread the poison of their false teaching. The only way in which to conserve the faith of the Church is to exclude modernists from any share in the teaching and conduct of Catholic religion. The latter portion of the encyclical outlines the practical program for ridding the Church of these dangerous foes. It is instructive to observe certain parallels between it and the program of the fundamentalists in the Protestant controversy.

The main difficulty with the modernists is that they will not conform to what the Church requires. The chief cause of the modernist spirit is said to be pride; whereas the primary virtue in true Catholic faith is humble submission to authority. This exercise of pride must be confronted with the discipline of the Church. The bishops are told: "It will be your first duty to resist such victims of

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

pride, to employ them only in the lowest and obscurest offices. The higher they try to rise, the lower let them be placed, so that the lowliness of their position may limit their power of causing damage."[1] One's advancement in his career is thus made contingent on the display of humble submission to the Church.

Definite provisions are to be made by which modernism may be entirely eliminated from the Church. In the first place the education of priests is to be carefully guarded. Since the errors of modernism spring from adopting modern theories in the place of the scholastic philosophy, all candidates for the priesthood are to be thoroughly indoctrinated with the system of Thomas Aquinas.[2] In the second place the greatest care is to be exercised in the appointment of university professors. "Any one who in any way is found to be tainted with modernism is to be excluded without compunction from these offices, ... and those who already occupy them are to be removed."[3] In the third place the bishops are charged to exercise a censorship over publications. They are to "prevent the writings of modernism or whatever savors of modernism or promotes it, from being read when they have been published, and to hinder their publication when they have not. No books or papers or periodicals whatever of this kind are to be permitted to seminarists or university students."[4] All contributors to periodicals are to be kept under episcopal supervision, in order to prevent any modernistic utterances from appearing over the signature of a Catholic.[5] Congresses or meet-

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 220.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 228–30.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 231.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 232.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 238.

ings of priests are not to be freely permitted, and when held must be so supervised that modernist opinions are not propagated.[1] It is recommended that a "council of vigilance" be organized in every diocese, the members of which, keeping their movements secret, shall spy upon suspected priests and report the same to the bishop.[2]

Finally, every Catholic in an official position is required to subscribe to an anti-modernist statement, taking oath that he will carefully preserve the faith of the Church and will steadfastly oppose all modernist interpretations. Thus no one can continue to present such teachings without violating a solemn oath formulated expressly to condemn modernism. The traditional safeguards are thus supplemented by special regulations designed to meet the present crisis.

As a result of this vigorous campaign against modernism, the movement no longer has any influential place in Catholicism. It is, of course, true that individuals here and there may be led to look with favor upon the proscribed ideas; but such individuals have no opportunity to secure promotion. The modernists who were so active and so influential at the time of the publication of the encyclical of Pope Pius X have all been compelled to leave the Church. Catholicism is officially committed to an autocratic administration, in which individuals must have their work constantly under the scrutiny of Rome. The characteristics of Catholicism are thus officially conserved from generation to generation. All questions are to be decided by referring them to the norms alleged to have been established by Christ centuries ago and committed to the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 239.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 240 ff.

apostolic bishops, pre-eminently to the Bishop of Rome, for correct interpretation.

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V

FUNDAMENTALISM

When the Protestant Reformation took place, it was almost universally taken for granted that, at least in the realm of religion, doctrines must rest on divine authority. As was shown in a previous chapter, political, social, and philosophical theories were all worked out in terms of an alleged conformity to divinely established principles.[1] Original Protestantism, therefore, was a religious movement quite in harmony with the thinking of its day. As the movement proceeded, it linked itself up with education and scholarship, confident that there was no inherent conflict between sound scholarship and evangelical faith. It was taken for granted that the welfare of the Protestant churches depended on an educated ministry. It is scarcely too much to say that until within the past generation the standards of education and of culture in the United States have been set primarily by schools founded and maintained by churches.

There were from the outset a few sects that distrusted education and sought to rely on the immediate religious endowment of their leaders by the gift of the Spirit. But on the whole Protestantism has been conscious of being the bearer of the highest culture. Protestant theologians have usually been eager to know what was being said by scholars. If the theories of scientists or philosophers

[1] It will be recalled that even the American Declaration of Independence appealed to "the laws of Nature and of Nature's God."

seemed inharmonious with Christian faith, theologians have engaged in scholarly discussion, believing that eventually there could be no contradiction between the truth which was discovered by research and the truth revealed by God. Moreover, as a rule, Protestant theologians have exercised considerable freedom in their expositions. They have found ways in which to "harmonize" new truth with accepted religious doctrines. In recent times Protestant theology has to a remarkable extent faced the outcome of a critical study of the Bible and the conclusions of modern science. There have been controversies aplenty. There have been individual cases where ecclesiastical authority was invoked to remove a "liberal" from an official position. But, on the whole, Protestant orthodoxy has confidently assumed that it was a positive interpreter of the culture in which it lived.

Within the past fifty years, however, it has been increasingly evident that the cordial acceptance of the method of free scientific inquiry will lead more definitely away from the time-honored tenets of orthodoxy than had formerly been supposed. Protestantism, therefore, is faced with the necessity of deciding whether it will go along with modern culture, modifying its theology as modern scholarship requires, or will insist on an unchanging content of doctrine, preserving this content by defying "destructive" criticism whenever it raises doubts concerning the validity of the traditional beliefs.

It is probable that the vast majority of Protestants would much prefer that their religion should go hand in hand with the best learning of the day. But their religious emotions are so attached to time-honored doctrines that they resent anything which would deprive them of confi-

dence in these. The orthodoxy of a generation ago sought to keep religious assurance and critical scholarship "harmonized." Touchy aspects of scientific and historical inquiry were so interpreted as to seem to reinforce the familiar doctrines. There are to this day, for example, religious leaders who constantly assure laymen that the results of archaeology "confirm the biblical record." Since very few laymen have any precise understanding of the details of either the biblical record or of archaeological research, general statements backed up by a few selected "finds" serve to allay distress. In somewhat the same way theologians give to scientific discoveries a turn which seems to make science confirm, or at least permit, religious faith of the conventional kind. It is not difficult to "harmonize" religion and science if one is careful to select details and if one remains securely within the realm of somewhat general principles.

But within the past few years scholarship has attained an almost complete independence from theology. For the first time in Christian history we have a generation educated primarily by critical methods in science and history rather than under the influence of ecclesiastical standards. The members of this generation feel perfectly at home in the world interpreted by modern science. They assume that they are free to question anything. Suddenly the more theological and general explanations which satisfied former generations seem vague and unsatisfactory. Where our fathers were careful to state their scientific conclusions so as to preserve some sort of harmony with the book of Genesis, the youth of today takes his geology straight and pictures himself as living on the kind of planet described by the geologist. In the field of biblical

scholarship students have come to think of these writings as expressions of the life of ancient peoples and as embodying, of course, the culture of that period with all its limitations. The beliefs of biblical writers are set forth in relation to the circumstances in which they emerged, and are often found to be so interrelated with those conditions as to be incapable of literal transference to a different culture.

In other words, a generation has come upon the scene which is looking at religion historically and critically. This means that religious convictions no longer rest on the acceptance of some "authority." They grow out of investigation and experiment. Individuals who share this spirit frankly face the fact that their theological conceptions are likely to change as they continue to make inquiries. And they insist that every individual has a right to make such honest inquiries as he wishes and to believe what he really does believe, whether his conclusions correspond to the ecclesiastical pattern or not. They feel that the church ought to make a cordial place for all sorts of honest inquiry instead of casting suspicion on unconventional modes of thought. "Authority" has no place in such a conception of religion.

Protestantism thus faces a serious question. Shall it countenance this somewhat radical transformation of its traditional attitudes and loyalties? Or shall it seek to reinstate the older orthodoxy in face of the fact that much of the theological scholarship of today is out of sympathy with the method of arriving at conclusions which characterized Christianity in the past.

From one point of view the fundamentalists seem to be truly preserving continuity with the past. They assert

that they are simply contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. They can point to the fact that they are repeating precisely what the honored creeds of Protestantism have always said. They insist that the liberals have demonstrably departed from the faith of the fathers. If Christianity is defined in terms of an authoritative system fixed for all time, it would seem to be incontrovertible that the fundamentalists, and not the liberals, are genuine representatives of true Christianity. One of the most prominent books on the side of the fundamentalists insists that liberalism is not Christianity at all, but is a new and different kind of religion.[1]

The crucial point in the controversy concerns the right of a preacher or teacher who has come to personal convictions which are out of accord with the pronouncements of the historic creeds to continue to teach or preach under the auspices of an evangelical church. The fundamentalists, like the Roman Catholics, think of Christianity as a divinely authorized theological system. A loyal Christian is supposed to "accept" this authoritative system. Fundamentalists define the issue as one between different doctrinal systems exactly as did Pope Pius X. Men are to be judged by the theology which they profess and teach. If they are not in harmony with the official standards, they are to be condemned.

The modernists, on the other hand, are concerned to make a place for that free inquiry which has been so fruitful in the realm of science. They feel that the only secure basis for faith is a method of reaching conclusions which always takes full account of critically ascertained facts. Instead of defending a system, they are searching for the

[1] J. G. Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism.*

truth. Instead of trying to "prove" the Bible to be infallible, they ask what the facts are concerning the Bible; and they find that the facts do not permit them to hold that conception of the origin or the nature of the Bible which was characteristic of religious thinking before critical scholarship had perfected its methods and had accumulated the vast array of data accessible to modern scholars. Instead of "accepting" a system of doctrines, which must be "defended" at all hazards, they inquire what conclusions on religious matters seem to be justified by the facts.

The bitterness of the fundamentalist controversy today is due to the fact that modern science and modern educational ideals are wholly on the side of the modernists. Our present-day culture is very different from the culture in which the classical Protestant creeds were formulated. Then it was taken for granted that theological jurisdiction over all life was the proper thing; hence theological formulations were quite in harmony with the spirit of the times. Today we live in a world where the intrusion of theological or ecclesiastical regulation is increasingly resented. The modernist, who would welcome in religion the methods and attitudes which are dominant in other realms, is thus in harmony with modern culture. The fundamentalist, with his attempt to lead religion back to "authoritative" ideals, is out of touch with the dominant trends of present-day culture.

This fact is extremely important. It accounts for the difference in tone between the older orthodox statements of belief and the fundamentalist expositions of those same beliefs. The older representatives of orthodoxy were conscious of living in a world where theological presupposi-

tions were taken for granted and where some kind of official or semi-official religious supervision of culture was entirely respectable. These theologians, therefore, could argue calmly, confident that their arguments would be sympathetically received by scholars in other realms. But the fundamentalist today is conscious of an influential body of scholars and educators who are shaping the culture of the day in such a way that the mere appeal to "authority" will have no weight. Since the whole theological system of the fundamentalists rests on the acceptance of an authoritarian method of deciding questions, they develop an inevitable hostility to the culture which discredits the only way in which they can effectively expound religion. The older orthodoxy was conscious of working in a friendly world. Fundamentalism is conscious of working in a world which is suspicious or hostile.

The program of fundamentalism is in many respects precisely parallel to the program of the Catholic Church in relation to modernism. Catholicism eliminated modernism from its ranks by setting up an official definition of Catholicism and requiring all true Catholics to swear allegiance. The centralized organization of Catholicism made this program practicable. Fundamentalism is likewise striving to secure an official definition of "true" Christianity, in order to test the loyalty of teachers and preachers by requiring subscription to this definition. For example, the attempt has been repeatedly made to secure the official adoption of a creed by the Northern Baptist Convention. All officials of the Convention could then be required to swear allegiance to this official pronouncement or could be adversely criticized if they permitted teachers or missionaries who held views divergent from the creed

to receive "Baptist money" while failing to teach Baptist doctrines. In the Presbyterian denomination fundamentalists have attempted to make obligatory a declaration of the General Assembly in 1910, specifying "five points" of doctrine as "essential." It is to be noted that these five points,[1] while either stated or implied in the official Westminister Confession of Faith, are not there given the specific anti-modernist turn which the fundamentalists desire. Likewise, the Baptist fundamentalists presented to the Northern Baptist Convention a creed which in the main consisted of the New Hampshire Confession, dating from 1833; but it was found necessary to add to the creed certain definite anti-modernist statements, in order to make it the kind of test desired. The animus of these additions is evident. When the older creeds were drawn up, they reflected a general confidence that the best thinking of the day would confirm the doctrines there stated. These confessions of faith were more concerned with giving a reasonable explanation of the doctrines set forth than they were with sharpening up the idea of submission to authority. The fundamentalists, on the other hand, are keenly conscious that they must reinstate the fundamental attitude of submission to authority in order to win. They are anti-rationalistic and anti-cultural, whereas the framers of the older creeds were favorably disposed to reason and culture.

The Catholic Church solved the problem by putting modernism out of business. This was accomplished by ecclesiastical decree. Fundamentalists are attempting to re-

[1] The five points are: the inerrancy of the Bible; the virgin birth of Christ; the substitutionary theory of the atonement; the bodily resurrection and ascension of Christ; the genuineness of the miracles which Jesus is reported to have wrought.

peat this program in their denominations. They are working to secure a definite anti-modernist pronouncement which can be officially invoked to displace modernists from the positions which they now hold in the denomination.[1]

One great difficulty confronts the fundamentalists. The Protestant churches are organized more or less distinctly on a democratic basis. There is no official central ecclesiastical authority such as exists in Catholicism. All questions must be debated in the meetings and conventions of the denominations. This gives the modernists just as primary rights as the fundamentalists in the debates. The ultimate decision rendered by a body made up of both modernists and fundamentalists is certain to reflect enough toleration of modernism to make it unsatisfactory to fundamentalists.

Here is found a distinct difference between the temper of the fundamentalists and that of the modernists. The fundamentalists believe that there is only one valid form of Christianity. That is the form authorized by the Scriptures (as interpreted by the fundamentalists). As they

[1] A striking instance of this purpose was seen at the Northern Baptist Convention in 1925, when a resolution was introduced, citing certain doctrines as the clear teaching of the New Testament (thus formulating a brief creed) and calling upon the Boards of Foreign Missions "to recall immediately every representative whether in evangelistic or educational work, who is found on investigation to deny [the original draft added the words 'or even to question'] any of the great fundamentals of our faith aforementioned . . . . and as speedily as possible to fill the places thus vacated by equally competent men and women whose evangelical faith and fervor cannot be questioned" (see *Annual of the Northern Baptist Convention, 1925*, p. 95). The resolution was eventually so altered as to omit any creedal statement, and urged the Boards to take such action "as seems to them will best conserve our denominational interests and best advance the kingdom of Christ" (*ibid.*, p. 174).

see the matter, any persons who do not accept this officially authorized conception of Christianity are disloyal to the divine requirements. They therefore assume that the standards of the denomination to which they belong ought to be precisely what they conceive to be thus officially authorized. They argue against modernistic ideas precisely as if the modernists were foes within the organization. We referred to the epithets applied to modernists in the papal encyclical. Similar accusations are made against modernists in Protestant bodies. It is assumed, and sometimes asserted, that the vast majority of the denomination is fundamentalist in belief. The modernists are therefore declared to be a small handful of radicals, gratuitously trying to introduce into an otherwise harmonious denomination ideas which the denomination does not want at all. Obviously the denomination ought to repudiate these disturbers of the peace. The honorable thing for modernists to do is to withdraw from the church where they are not wanted and to join some other body (the Unitarian, of course) where they will feel at home.

The modernists, on the other hand, recognize that there are inevitably honest differences of opinion in the church today. They recognize the right (demonstrably as essential a tenet of Protestantism as the authority of the Scriptures) of every individual to determine for himself what he ought to believe. They conceive of a Christian church, not as a body to enforce uniformity of opinion, but as a co-operative attempt of Christian men and women to engage in Christian enterprises in such a way as to preserve "liberty of prophesying." They, therefore, object to the adoption of creeds or to requirements of technical conformity. They want such decisions as will leave

both fundamentalists and modernists free to develop and exercise religious devotion in ways best suited to the temperament and the gifts of each individual.

The fundamentalist's attitude toward higher education is significant. As has been said, the older representatives of orthodoxy were believers in the positive and desirable contributions to religious thinking to be made by the education and culture of their day. There was no breach between them and the colleges and universities. The fundamentalist, on the other hand, is profoundly distrustful of modern education. He sees that scholarship in the theological seminaries has led to the conclusion that the Bible is not the kind of book that the fundamentalist insists that it is. Those who follow these scholars do not accept the primary axiom on which the whole fundamentalist structure depends. Therefore the theological seminaries are denounced as hotbeds of infidelity. The colleges, and even the high schools, are discovered to be teaching geological and biological theories which do not coincide with the statements of the first chapters of Genesis. Consequently these educational institutions are condemned as places where the faith of young people is wrecked. An aroused Christian conscience, it is assumed, will insist on the elimination from institutions of higher learning of all persons who so teach as to throw suspicion on the infallibility of the Bible.[1]

[1] The logic of the fundamentalist position has been admirably stated by Mr. Bryan as follows: "If a man accepts Darwinism, or evolution applied to man, and is consistent, he rejects the miracle and the supernatural as impossible. He commences with the first chapter of Genesis and blots out the Bible story of man's creation, not because the evidence is insufficient, but because miracle is inconsistent with evolution. If he is consistent, he will go through the Old Testament step by step and cut out

It will be recalled that one of the points in the Catholic program against modernism was the exclusion of all unsound professors from Catholic colleges and universities. Precisely the same demand is made by fundamentalists. But here again they are faced with the fact that there is usually no centralized ecclesiastical control over the schools supported by the denomination. The utmost that can be accomplished is to voice constantly the demand that the denominational schools shall be purged of all unsound teaching. These schools, however, are almost all organized under the direction of boards of trustees, who are not likely to take kindly to dictation from without. The campaign against the schools, therefore, has not been successful. Modernist teachers remain in spite of the argument that they are dishonest in taking denominational money while failing to deliver Simon-pure denominational teachings.

The main stress, therefore, is necessarily laid on the organization and support of schools which are avowedly sound in the faith. Of primary importance among these are the so-called "Bible schools," which provide for the education of thousands of young people so as to equip them to be effective propagandists of the fundamentalist faith. The graduates of these schools reflect the polemic attitude of fundamentalism and go out to insist in every church that conformity to the fundamentalist creed be enforced. It is hoped that if sufficient numbers of persons

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all the miracles and all the supernatural. He will then take up the New Testament and cut out all the supernatural—the virgin birth of Christ. His miracles and His resurrection, leaving the Bible a story-book without binding authority upon the conscience of man" (*New York Times*, Sunday, February 26, 1922).

can be induced to take such training, public sentiment will gradually be changed in the churches so as to exclude the modernists.

At the World Conference on the Fundamentals of the Faith, held in Philadelphia in May, 1919, the Committee on Schools and Colleges made a report embodying fundamentalist sentiment on the subject of education. The Committee on Resolutions in this same conference commented as follows on the situation:

> We deplore the wave of scepticism that has wrecked many theological seminaries and rendered them unfit places for the education of our ministry, but we rejoice that in the Bible Schools God has again raised up a standard against the enemy. We recommend to the young men and women of our land who wish training for religious work, that they secure the same in the Bible training schools of the country and in the remaining safe colleges and seminaries of the same. We propose to catalog such schools as we believe to be worthy of commendation and support and we advise that the central committee at Philadelphia stand ready to furnish information to all young people who are giving consideration to the matter of education.

Such a quasi-official list of "sound" schools is the fundamentalist equivalent to the Catholic procedure in ridding universities of modernist teachers. But whereas the centralized power of the Catholic Church could deal with individual professors in all Catholic schools, the fundamentalists are compelled by circumstances merely to warn students against schools tainted with modernism and to commend and strengthen schools which stand staunchly for the faith once delivered.

Finally let us ask what doctrines in the authoritative system of beliefs are most emphasized by fundamentalists. While they accept the entire body of orthodox theology, their consciousness of hostility to certain modern

movements leads to emphasis on a few crucial doctrines. It is possible to be orthodox without being a fundamentalist. That is, one may be willing to affirm all the doctrines commonly specified in an orthodox creed, without singling out any of them for peculiar emphasis. Fundamentalism is identified by special emphasis on the following points:

1. Of supreme importance is the doctrine of the infallibility of the Scriptures. Since the guarantee of any doctrine is its divine credentials, there can be no sound theology which does not start with the affirmation that the Bible is to be the absolute and final criterion of belief. The Philadelphia Conference, to which reference has been made, declared: "We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as verbally inspired of supreme and final authority in faith and life." Any type of scholarship which would cast doubt on this definition of the Bible is to be opposed and eradicated. "Higher criticism" is one of the chief enemies to be attacked on all occasions. Scientific theories which suggest questions as to the literal accuracy of the first chapters of Genesis are roundly condemned. It might almost be said that this doctrine of an authoritative Bible is the *one* essential of true faith. For if this be granted, then the truth of all doctrines taught in the Bible is automatically guaranteed. Exactly as in Catholicism a prior "acceptance" of the authority of the Church opens the way for priests to speak and act as agents of divine authority, so the prior "acceptance" of the authority of the Bible would induce an attitude of submission to what fundamentalists declare the Bible to teach.[1]

[1] The importance of preserving the doctrine of inerrancy leads occasionally to interesting conceptions. For example, Dr. R. A. Torrey, in

2. The interpretation of Christianity is essentially in terms of a supernatural plan of salvation. The continuance of the medieval speculative method of thinking is nowhere better seen than here. The fundamentalist starts with a theological philosophy. He has little concern for modern scientific ways of arriving at conclusions. He asks, not what men have discovered, but what God has ordained. The religious life of man is thus to be interpreted in terms of the divine plan. Human history is read in the framework of an original divine creation, followed by the Fall of man, which necessitated a special provision of divine grace for his redemption. This provision has been revealed in the Bible. On the acceptance of this divinely established plan man must depend for his salvation. To attempt to substitute for this a scheme devised by human ingenuity is to affront God.

3. Central in the divinely established plan of salvation is the doctrine of the deity of Christ. The salvation which Christ brings to man is valid just because it is brought by a being possessed of a divine nature, who thus

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discussing the question whether we can accept the sentiments of the imprecatory Psalms as infallibly true, says: "There is nothing here that is not in perfect harmony with the thought that the whole Bible is God's Word, though in some instances, while the record of what is said is correct and exact, that which is recorded as being said may not in itself be right; but it is God's Word that man said it, though what man was recorded as saying may not be God's Word" (*Difficulties in the Bible*, p. 72).

The skeptical reader is inclined to ask just what is the advantage of a difficult doctrine of infallibility if all that is guaranteed by it is the correctness of the narrative but not the truth of what is narrated. Apparently the fundamentalist, like the liberal, makes certain reservations with respect to certain statements. But the fundamentalist, by the curious reasoning above, enables himself to feel that his doctrines are backed by divine authority; while the liberal admits that his doctrines are the result of his own critical thinking.

has inherent power to redeem man. This divine nature is evidenced by the supernatural birth of Jesus. The virgin birth is specifically one of the test points in the modern controversy between the fundamentalists and the modernists. To doubt or to deny the historicity of this story in the gospels is to leave the doubter utterly uncertain as to the reliability of Christ's work in saving men.[1]

4. Another essential is the doctrine of redemption on the ground of the merits of the death of Christ. The World Conference on Fundamentals at Philadelphia in 1919 declared: "We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice; and that all that believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood." One of the sources of loud complaint against liberalism is that it omits emphasis on this essential. To fail to preach the "efficacy of the shed blood" is to deprive men of what they have a right to know about the divinely appointed plan of salvation.

5. Another point much emphasized by fundamentalism is the doctrine of the "personal, premillennial and immanent return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." The triumph of Christianity is not expected to come by the slow process of natural evolution. Human nature is too

[1] Mr. W. J. Bryan put the matter clearly and forcibly as follows: "The task that Christ came to perform was more than a man's task. No man aspiring to be a God could have done what he did; it required a God condescending to be a man. Is it unreasonable that one who offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin, revealed God to man, and guides man by his heaven-born wisdom, should have been conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary? The rejection of the virgin birth not only condemns the Bible record as false, but it changes one's whole conception of Christ and makes it difficult, if not impossible, to present Him as the Bible presents Him" (*The Forum*, July, 1923).

evil to warrant faith in such an outcome. Precisely as the redemption of the individual depends on divine power, so the ultimate triumph of good over evil in the world at large is attainable only as Christ shall return from heaven and set up the kingdom of righteousness.[1]

While the premillenarian program has been generally emphasized, it has been found that there are many genuinely orthodox persons who are not entirely sure that this particular type of premillenarianism is taught in the Bible. Accordingly, fundamentalists have recently permitted a certain amount of liberty of interpretation so long as one holds in some fashion that the ultimate triumph of righteousness is to come through the personal and visible second coming of Christ.

6. In recent years denunciation of the doctrine of evolution has taken a foremost place in the fundamentalist creed. The evolutionary doctrine is obviously different from the account of the origin of man taught in the first chapters of Genesis. If, then, one holds the evolutionary hypothesis, he has abandoned faith in the inerrancy of the Bible, and he has substituted for God's own account of the way in which man came into existence a man-made hypothesis (Mr. Bryan called it a "guess"). Largely un-

[1]During the war, great prominence was given to this doctrine. The warlike figures of speech found in apocalyptic literature were employed, and the picture of an imminent cosmic catastrophe was brought into the foreground. The details of a premillenarian program were elaborated. According to this program, Christ will suddenly appear to a world delivered over to wickedness and will summon those who are genuine believers to meet him in the air. This leaves the earth inhabited only by those who are unworthy of Christ. For a definite period the saints who have been gathered in this "rapture" will live in bliss while the world passes through a period of "tribulation." At the end of the "tribulation" Christ appears again to judge the world and to establish his kingdom.

der the influence of Mr. Bryan, attempts have been made in several states to secure legislation forbidding the teaching of the doctrine of evolution in any school supported by public money. Said Mr. Bryan:

> The Bible has in many places been excluded from the schools on the ground that religion should not be taught by those paid by public taxation. If this doctrine is sound, what right have the enemies of religion to teach irreligion in the public schools. If the Bible cannot be taught, why should Christian tax-payers permit the teaching of guesses that make the Bible a lie? A teacher might just as well write over the door of his room, "Leave Christianity behind you, all ye who enter here," as to ask his students to accept a hypothesis directly and irreconcilably antagonistic to the Bible.[1]

Much public attention has been given to the campaign against the evolutionary hypothesis. The above quotation shows that the fundamentalist interest is not primarily in the doctrine itself but rather in the preservation of the doctrine of the infallibility of the Bible. Fundamentalists frequently challenge believers in the doctrine of evolution to debate the matter. But such debates are likely to be avoided by scientific scholars. A debate offers an opportunity to appeal by clever rhetorical tricks to the emotions of an untrained audience. The fundamentalist is accustomed to derive his conclusions by asking what the Bible teaches. Having ascertained that teaching, he takes it for granted that any contrary teaching is bad. He therefore undertakes to refute it by showing its badness. To declare that it is an irresponsible "guess"; to assert that no new species has ever been produced (in spite of scientific evidence of such new species); to arouse religious prejudice by intimating that the evolutionists are denying the Word of God; to connect the evolutionary

[1] *New York Times*, Sunday, February 26, 1922.

hypothesis with Nietzsche and to make Nietzsche responsible (along with the German higher critics) for the great war—such are the stock arguments in debate. It is difficult for a scientist to take them seriously.

The fundamentalist movement can perhaps be best understood as the persistence in Protestantism of the religious presuppositions which were shared by both Catholicism and Protestantism four hundred years ago. Within the past few decades a new method of thinking on all subjects has gradually become dominant. This new method critically examines the facts and, when necessary, revises previously held opinions. By the use of this method, the revision of religious beliefs has been shown to be inevitable. The fundamentalists, like the Catholics, insist that conclusions shall be reached by consulting divinely established sources of authority. Catholicism accomplished this end by an ecclesiastical discipline which required all officials either to submit to authority or to leave the Church. The fundamentalists set precisely this alternative before Protestants. But they lack control of an ecclesiastical authority to which all Protestants can be compelled to submit. Theoretically, the Bible is such an authority. It is infallible and authoritative exactly as the Church is infallible and authoritative in the Catholic program. But the Church has officials who can enforce its authority. The Bible in Protestantism is left to the conscience of the individual. If a Catholic refuses to follow what the Church says, action immediately follows. If a Protestant refuses to accept what the Bible says, the Bible itself has no organ for discipline. The Catholic procedure thus cannot be maintained among Protestants. Yet the fundamentalists are

attempting precisely this impossible program. In order to succeed they are compelled to strengthen the machinery of ecclesiastical discipline. This accounts for their endeavor to secure the enactment of official creeds by denominational authority and for their demand that all officials and missionaries be required to submit to ecclesiastical censorship as a condition of retention in the service of the denomination. The stout resistance against this plan of stronger centralization on the part of a large portion of the membership in every Protestant body makes it improbable that fundamentalism can win. It represents what is essentially a counterpart in Protestantism of the Catholic conception of religion. That portion of Protestantism which does not sympathize with the fundamentalist movement represents a conception so different from that of Catholicism that it cannot wholesomely adopt the Catholic program for the settling of disputed questions. To that other type of Protestantism we must now turn our attention.

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EVANGELICAL
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

VI

THE APPEAL TO CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

Theological controversy among Christians has always been accompanied by more or less bitterness. Disagreement over doctrine, when doctrine is thought to be authoritatively required, is especially unfortunate. It inevitably focuses attention on matters of technical authority rather than on the less formal aspects of Christian living. The disputants, each claiming to be the rightful representative of the divine will, easily become arrogant and abusive. Each looks upon the refusal of the other to submit as evidence of sinful perversity. Unlovely attitudes and practices come to the front. Eventually the Christian conscience deplores excessive emphasis on matters which divide well-intentioned people.

Protestantism in recent times has become increasingly dissatisfied with theological contentions. The older denominational distinctions are becoming less sharp. Some bodies which once separated because of what seemed to be irreconcilable theological differences are now finding a way of reuniting. There is a widespread feeling that Protestantism ought to be able to present a more united front against the evils of our day. This desire to put doctrinal disputes into the background has found expression in a new type of theology. The attempt is made to give prominence to those articles of faith which are the expression of fundamental and supposedly universal Christian experience, and thus to appeal to life itself rather than to official authority.

Reinforcing this practical interest in personal experience as contrasted with abstruse doctrine is the increasing influence of scientific method. A doctrine in science is maintained, not because it is taught in an authoritative book, nor because it is logically consistent, but rather because it explains the facts. Theories must always be reexamined and, when necessary, revised so as to accord with the facts. Moreover, facts must be discovered by actual observation and experience. The laboratory method supersedes the method of speculation.

If this method were to be applied in the realm of theology, it would mean that doctrine must justify itself, not by appeal to an "authority," but rather by citing facts which everyone can discover for himself.

When this scientific spirit is applied to certain tenets of the older theology, some remarkable changes of emphasis take place. Orthodox theology started with a doctrine of biblical inspiration which justified the constant appeal to biblical authority. But what do we actually know concerning the origin of the books of the Bible? Obviously no one can now ascertain precisely the conditions under which the original manuscripts of the Bible were produced. Theories here are mere theories. The orthodox defenders of biblical infallibility admit the possibility of minor errors in transmission and translation of the Scriptures and claim absolute infallibility only for the "original manuscripts" of the Bible. But these manuscripts have long since disappeared. A doctrine of inspiration which is confined to these seems somewhat speculative.

Another factor of importance should be noted. Modern biblical scholarship has come to be a very compli-

cated matter. Expert knowledge of Hebrew and Greek; familiarity with the constantly increasing information derived from archaeology and historical research; an ability to estimate the various manuscripts in which the Bible is preserved and to correct these in the light of textual criticism and the evidence drawn from ancient versions; the ability to reconstruct from a thousand unconnected details the social background of a given writing so as to understand precisely what the writer had in mind—all these processes underlying biblical interpretation call for highly specialized scholarship. Formerly every professor in a theological seminary was supposed to be competent to interpret the Bible with reasonable correctness. Today all except the biblical experts are hesitant about making statements save on very general grounds. The theologian of today usually does not have a sufficiently accurate kind of biblical knowledge to enable him to retain the respect of his colleagues in biblical departments when he ventures on the minutiae of historical interpretation. The way in which many preachers and popular expositors use the Bible is a source of more or less amusement to biblical scholars. What these preachers and writers say may be entirely wholesome in content, but that content often is demonstrably *not* what the biblical passage quoted to sustain it means.[1]

Into modern religious thinking, then, have come three powerful considerations, all pointing toward a new meth-

[1] One of the most striking illustrations of this is the widely used Christian Endeavor benediction: "The Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another." In the original setting the "benediction" is a warning that if the other party attempts secretly to get an unfair advantage, the injured person can count on the all-seeing eye of God to observe the treachery.

od of theological investigation. First, the growing impatience with the dogmatism of those who rest their case entirely on "authority" leads to the assertion that Christianity is life rather than doctrine. Secondly, the adoption of critical scientific methods in all other realms leads theologians to desire to be as scientific as scholars in other branches. Thirdly, the increasing complexity of biblical interpretation leads the younger theologians to turn away from a field so fraught with controversies and difficulties and to seek a more direct source of belief. This source is believed to be found in the religious experience of Christians.

This experimental method of dealing with religious belief was outlined more than a century ago by the great German theologian, Schleiermacher. He lived at a time when orthodox theological doctrines were being discredited by the rationalism of his day. Schleiermacher was convinced that religion is essentially a profound experience, involving a mystical relationship between the inner life of man and the great mysterious Infinite upon which man is dependent. To explore and interpret this fundamentally religious experience is the task of theology. By contrast, the defense of doctrines purely by appeal to external authority seemed very artificial. Following Schleiermacher, many theologians attempted to make use of this method. In America, however, it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that there was any widespread appreciation of the ideal which Schleiermacher had so long before set forth.

In 1890 Professor Lewis F. Stearns, of Bangor Theological Seminary, published a widely read book, entitled *The Evidence of Christian Experience,* in which he gave an

effective apologetic for Christian beliefs by showing that they were confirmed by experience. Three years later he published *Present Day Theology*, a charmingly readable book which commended theological doctrines, not by quoting scriptural texts, but by indicating how these doctrines express the truths which Christian men actually experience to be true. Five years later Dr. William Newton Clarke published a volume entitled *An Outline of Christian Theology*. This has been perhaps the most influential book of its kind in American religious thinking. The opening sentences of this volume were calculated to win the confidence of many persons who were troubled either by the dogmatism of the older theological method or by the serious questions raised by biblical criticism. Said Dr. Clarke: "Theology is preceded by religion as botany by the life of plants. Religion is the reality of which theology is the study."[1] Again, "Theology thus deals only with the realities that make up religion, and with them only as they enter into religion."[2] This vital experimental approach to the problems of theology was in refreshing contrast to the orthodox point of view expressed in such a statement as this from Dr. A. H. Strong, "Doctrine precedes life, and Christian doctrine, not mere religious feeling, is the cause of Christianity as a distinctive religion."[3]

It is perhaps difficult for us, who live in an age when theology has become emancipated from the older dogmatism, to appreciate the feeling of joy and relief with which this program of an experimental theology was welcomed. At one blow it eliminated the necessity for discussing the complicated questions which biblical scholarship had

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 1. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

[3] *Systematic Theology*, I, 20–21.

raised. It relieved pastors from the duty of discussing "higher criticism" as an indispensable preliminary to the establishing of doctrine on a biblical basis. It enabled men to go directly to the raw material out of which theology is constructed. Religious thinkers could start with the incontrovertible fact that thousands of men have a real experience of contact with God and of salvation through Christ. They had only to examine that experience to ascertain what convictions concerning God and Christ are involved. These convictions could then be set forth as a body of theology and defended as reasonable beliefs. Such an approach to the study of religion places it on a level of respectability with the sciences, which look to actual experiment and observation rather than to authoritative statements coming from antiquity. Moreover, it lays stress on vital religion instead of on dogmatic contention. The method of appeal to experience thus seemed to open the door both to a scientific vindication of the task of the theologian and to the revivifying of religious experience in the churches.

From the start, however, the adherents of the traditional method of appeal to divine authority pointed out certain aspects of the new method which deserved more consideration than had been given to them by its advocates. Just what do we mean by "experience"? Are Christian experiences all alike? If not, how shall we determine whose experience is reliable in cases where Christians differ? Is not "experience" a subjective thing, anyway? Will not a theology of experience consist merely of the subjective opinions of the theologian? Will not the investigation of experience lead to the discovery of psychological causes for the experience rather than to a sys-

tem of divine causation? In the light of these questions it is instructive to indicate the direction in which the appeal to Christian experience has moved in the course of the thirty years during which it has been so largely employed in America.

The first advocates of the appeal to experience were men who had been brought up under the influence of biblical orthodoxy. Their religious experience, therefore, had been shaped in accordance with what they believed to be biblical doctrines. When, in their mature years, they consulted the dictates of their own religious convictions, they found these to be in general accord with the theology which had been expounded on a biblical basis. Indeed, Professor Stearns admittedly *derived* his doctrines from Scripture, but he attempted to show that the validity of the doctrines depends not simply on their being found in the Bible but also on the fact that the Christian believer finds them to be true in his experience. He had no thought of any contradiction between what Scripture teaches and what the truly religious consciousness affirms. Professor Olin A. Curtis, in a book published in 1905, said: "In constructing a system of Christian doctrine the source for all data is the Bible and the Bible alone. . . . . The Christian consciousness is not a source, it furnishes no data; but it lights up the data, it unfolds the norms, it helps one see the biblical truth more Christianly."[1] It was felt by the early advocates of the new method that an appeal to experience would not really change the content of theology. The Bible would still remain the source of doctrine, but the Christian's experience would furnish a

[1] *The Christian Religion Personally Given in a System of Doctrine*, p. 185.

vital means of verifying the doctrines of the Bible and thus would release religious thinking from the externalism of a scholastic method of using the Scripture.

This somewhat naïve equating of Christian experience and biblical doctrine was possible only to those who had not felt the influence of exact historical interpretation of the Bible. Within the past twenty-five years, however, biblical students have become aware that the thought-world of the biblical writers was very different from the thought-world of the classical Protestant theologians, and even more divergent from modern ideas. Certain aspects of biblical teaching are now clearly seen to belong to an age which has passed away. Professor Harry Emerson Fosdick has forcibly painted this contrast when in discussing typical perplexities of modern religious thinkers he says: "Get back to the nub of their difficulty and you find it in biblical categories which they no longer believe —miracles, demons, fiat creation, apocalyptic hopes, eternal hell, or ethical conceptions of Jehovah in the Old Testament that shock the modern conscience."[1]

If, now, it be recognized that modern religious experience does not coincide precisely with what the Bible teaches, a problem is raised which was not contemplated by the early advocates of the appeal to experience. The problem may be stated as follows. The appeal to the Bible tests beliefs by invoking authoritative texts. The appeal to experience rests conclusions ultimately on verifiable facts. If, now, the utterances of the Bible are found not to coincide with what experience discovers to be real, what shall be done? Shall the difficulty be met by seeking to reinstate authority in a more tenable form or by sub-

[1] *The Modern Use of the Bible*, p. 5.

stituting for the appeal to authority a frank and open-minded search for the truth? The "liberal" theology of the past quarter-century has been wrestling with this problem.

The weight of traditional usage and of ecclesiastical discipline has all been on the side of retaining the appeal to authority. The weight of scientific procedure in all other branches of learning is on the side of the search for reality, regardless of whether it does or does not conform to what men formerly thought. The issue is dramatically presented to the public in the attempt to require by law that teachers of science shall make their theories conform to what the Bible teaches. But it is of the very essence of science *not* to be bound by previously expressed doctrines, but to search for reality.

The appeal to experience changes theology more than was anticipated by its early advocates. The older theologians were concerned primarily with the effort adequately to define God and God's ways of acting with reference to the world and to man's salvation. Some of the questions thus raised were highly metaphysical, finding little or no reflection in actual religious experience. But a theology resting on experience asks some searching questions. Who can *experience* those subtle distinctions within the Godhead which were defined in the traditional doctrine of the trinity? Who can *experience* the details of a future life so as exactly to describe the fate of the wicked or the rewards of the righteous? Who can *experience* the precise provisions of the theological transaction supposed to have taken place between God and Christ in order to make the efficacy of the cross correspond to certain a priori conditions of justice and mercy? Who can *experi-*

ence the precise way in which the universe came into being? The appeal to experience inevitably exposed the purely speculative character of some doctrines which had been the center of bitter theological controversy.

Moreover, when experience is taken as the criterion of theological inquiry, those conceptions in the Bible which find no reproduction in modern experience drop out of sight. If the theologian is under obligation to reproduce everything that the Bible teaches, he must, for example, include a doctrine of angels in his systematic theology. Dr. A. H. Strong devoted twenty-one pages to a discussion of the nature and activities of angels. The theologies of experience, on the contrary, have little or nothing to say on the subject. We have no experience of angels. Again, traditional conceptions of the nature of the atonement resting upon the Bible made much of the Jewish sacrificial system. The theologies of experience treat this system as a phase of religious thinking which has now passed away. Instead of citing biblical texts, the theologian employs the newer method of asking what the Christian actually experiences as a result of his contact with Christ.

This experimental test changes the object of discussion from the external guarantees of doctrine to the internal aspects of vital belief. As has been contended by a German theologian, it substitutes an anthropocentric discussion for the theocentric method which theology has professed to hold.[1] Instead of inquiring what opinions God requires men to hold, it inquires what conceptions of God grow out of man's experience. It is evident that unless "experience" is precisely defined this method leaves

[1] E. Schäder, *Theozentrische Theologie.*

religious opinions more or less to the chance preferences of individuals. The first enthusiasm over the use of the method came when the thinking of men was still for the most part shaped by standardized theological interpretations of the world. But when "experience" comes to be shaped by non-theological education, what kind of convictions will emerge?

Indeed, it may fairly be charged against many "liberal" expositions of theology that they are very hazy and ambiguous on points where the traditional theology was clear and definite. If it be assumed (as is not infrequently the case) that the appeal to experience preserves all the beliefs that orthodoxy affirms—at least in their "essentials"—the theologian who uses the method is under prior obligation to affirm all orthodox beliefs. The doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible must be retained; but just what does "experience" testify to concerning the Bible? It can scarcely furnish any information concerning the psychological conditions under which the words of the Bible were suggested to the writers. It cannot tell whether Moses wrote the Pentateuch, or David the Psalms. Strictly speaking, all that experience can do is to declare whether a biblical message is inspiring to the reader. In Coleridge's phrase, it is possible for anyone to know that the Bible "finds" him. But so subjective a declaration does not sufficiently safeguard the doctrine of the authority of the Bible. So we find Professor William Newton Clarke writing: "It is not quite enough to say with Coleridge that I know the Bible to be divine because it finds me. It has a right to find me—that is the real point."[1] The reader is thus left with the feeling that the

[1] *The Use of the Scriptures in Theology*, p. 159.

important thing to affirm concerning the Bible is not merely the value that he finds in it but a super-empirical quality which gives to it a "right" (authority) to evoke the proper experience. Similarly, Professor William Adams Brown preserves the word "infallible" in a discussion of the value of the Bible by saying that what the word really means is not a mere mechanical guarantee of the correctness of the facts narrated. Its true meaning is that when the Bible is read in the humble and prayerful spirit which the Christian possesses, it will "infallibly lead the individual and the church into that knowledge of the truth which they need to know."[1] Such a statement evidently aims to preserve the orthodox reliance on a super-experiential guidance. But it raises the embarrassing question as to whether "infallible" leadings actually are secured by such reading of the Bible.

A similar ambiguity is found in the treatment of miracles. Miracles are not expected in the experience of modern men. Moreover, no one can now go back two thousane years, more or less, and experimentally verify the miracles recorded in the Bible. What, then, shall be said about miracles? A common way of meeting the difficulty is to point out certain circumstances which men today can observe and to interpret the biblical miracle by analogy. For example, Dr. A. H. Strong deals with the miracle at Cana by the following suggestion:

> In the New Testament Christ took water to make wine, and took the five loaves to make bread, just as in ten thousand vineyards today he is turning the moisture of the earth into the juice of the grape, and in ten thousand fields is turning carbon into corn.[2]

[1] *Modern Theology and the Preaching of the Gospel*, p. 84.

[2] *Systematic Theology*, I, 119.

Professor William Adams Brown makes the somewhat bewildering statement: "Science knows no single miracle because for science all the world has become miraculous."[1] President Henry Churchill King remarks, in opposition to the view which leaves miracles inexplicable marvels, "Should we not rather say,—Doubtless God's relation to nature in this miraculous occurrence remains just what it always is?"[2] But just what is it "always"?

In the above statements, which could be paralleled many times over in modern apologetics, the incompatibility of the older and the newer conceptions of theology is clearly seen. The authors of these statements really derive their theological conclusions from experience. Modern experience affirms the invariable orderliness of nature. Miracles in the sense of violation of that order are incredible. But if the authority of the Bible be retained, it requires one to affirm the reality of whatever is recorded in the Bible. For a theologian deliberately to make a statement which would discredit the Bible would lay him open to the charge of being "destructive." Hence the attempt is made to show how "miracles" may be affirmed in accordance with the idea of the orderliness of nature. Whether, if this interpretation were to be taken seriously, the events so interpreted would continue to be called miracles is a question which is not raised. Such an exposition does not fairly face the issue. It does not ask whether confidence in theological conclusions is to rest on authority or on experienced reality. It seeks to keep both by so manipulating the conception of "miracle" that it can be subsumed under "experience," and thus the "authority"

[1] *Christian Theology in Outline*, p. 228.

[2] *Reconstruction in Theology*, p. 74.

of the biblical accounts of miracle may remain undisturbed.

Another important realm in which the appeal to experience is making significant alterations in the traditional theology is in the interpretation of the character of Christ. The abstruse definitions of the "natures" of Christ lie beyond the reach of experience. Such phrases as "consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead" and "consubstantial with us according to the Manhood" are highly speculative. To be required to acknowledge Christ "in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of the natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in One Person and One Subsistence"[1] means that the person assenting does so on the basis of authority rather than on the testimony of his experience. There is no way in which we can *experience* the metaphysical qualities affirmed in the above statement.

Consequently there has been a very general depreciation of metaphysical conceptions of the divinity of Christ. In contrast with the older method, theologians have been attempting to ascertain precisely what religious experience affirms concerning Jesus. One influential type of experimental Christology will be discussed in the next chapter.

In recent years, however, the emphasis laid on religious experience has led to a new interest. The religious experience of Jesus was scarcely noticed in the older Christologies. The "human nature" of Christ was an abstract thing. Some theologians even went so far as to

[1] Chalcedonian symbol.

insist that Jesus took on "impersonal" human nature. Against this abstraction there has been a widespread reaction in recent years. When modern men are interested in experience, they become eager to know what the experience of Jesus was. A surprisingly large number of current books for study and for edification are concerned to set forth the religious experience of Jesus, so that men today may in some measure share that experience. This endeavor would naturally discredit those interpretations which locate the "nature" of Christ in a realm of impenetrable mystery.

The appeal to experience, then, while originally employed by men who had been taught to think in terms of the orthodox system, raised certain questions of which theologians were not aware so long as theology consisted simply in the reproduction of what is taught in the Bible. As these questions have been faced squarely, there has been a noteworthy change in the emphasis placed on the more speculative elements of the traditional system. First some of these were declared to be "non-essential," although they were still regarded as true. Later these "non-essentials" tended to drop out, save where they were forced into the foreground by controversy. The consequence is a greatly reduced content of theology. Attention is given to "practical" questions, and the metaphysical discussions of former times are more and more relegated to mere historical consideration, or are omitted altogether.

The appeal to "experience" leads to another theological complication which was not anticipated by the first advocates of the method. Just what is religious experience? It is certainly something more reliable than the

whims of any individual person. Men like Stearns and Clarke took it for granted that there was general consensus of opinion as to what a religious man experiences. But when individuals differ, who is to determine which is the normal (and therefore normative) experience? How shall we distinguish between an experience which wholesomely reflects the reality in relation to which we live and an experience built up from wishes, hallucinations, vague speculations? There are two main directions in which the answer is sought.

On the one hand the attempt is made to ground Christian experience on some tenable conception of revelation, and thus to secure its utterances against the dissolving influences of mere individual preference. The majority of theologians are still taking this pathway. It fits in better with the inherited ways of thinking about religion. It makes possible the retention of at least the semblance of a super-empirical norm which may be applied to all types of theology so as to unify them.

On the other hand we have the very significant development of the psychological study of religion in the past quarter-century. Here the attempt is made to employ strictly scientific methods of determining just what religious experience is and to insist that theological construction shall conform to what psychology discovers as to the nature and the function of religion. This scientific spirit links the investigator to the other sciences rather than to the theological world-view of traditional Christianity. In order to be sure that he is in touch with actually universal experiences, and not with sentiments induced by special indoctrination, the investigator is likely to make his inquiries in the fields of non-Christian as well as of

Christian religions. What he discovers as to the essentials of religion are, therefore, what may be found in the religious needs and satisfactions of all men rather than those which are to be found in Christianity alone. The influence of this psychological study of religion is strongly in the direction of discrediting the unique features of Christianity, since these may easily be explained as the result of special indoctrination. The two methods above mentioned indicate an important cleavage within liberalism. On the one hand are those who preserve the orthodox feeling and attitude, who regard Christianity as something "given" by revelation (although the conception of revelation must be adjusted to historical facts). On the other hand are those who consider all religion as a human quest for the best possible life and who regard Christianity as one of the many ways in which this religious quest is being prosecuted. It is believed to be the best way, but it is more important to find out whether it is *really* the best than it is to assume beforehand that Christian doctrines must be defended at all costs.

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VII

THE APPEAL TO CHRIST

The last chapter indicated what was involved when theologians began to appeal to Christian experience. Their own religious thinking had been developed on the basis of the traditional beliefs. They were convinced that they actually experienced what those beliefs demanded; hence they retained the conception of an authoritative revelation. They were not ready to be so empirical as to say that Christianity is simply what it is. Consequently a primary task for a theology of experience was the discovery of some conception of revelation which could be validated by the appeal to experience rather than by a questionable dialectic.

The course of biblical criticism seemed to point the way to such a reconstruction. The accurate study of the Old Testament made it evident that not all of the Old Testament met the test of a Christian standard. A Christian conscience was compelled to apologize for some of the moral ideals found in Hebrew history. As the conception of historical development came to be more familiar to students of the Bible, the idea of a "progressive revelation" was suggested. It was held that God revealed himself to men gradually, starting with very elementary truths, and little by little leading his chosen people to a more correct apprehension of his will.

At each stage there was a communication of life and truth needed for that stage; the revelation contained in itself the principle

for the development to the next higher stage; the advanced stage in turn conserved the principle of the preceding stage and contained the germ which should expand into the next higher; the lines of development all converged toward fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the crowning revelation.[1]

Such a conception of revelation relieved the theologian of some of the embarrassment caused by a doctrine of equal inspiration of all parts of Scripture. He could now dispose of those aspects of Old Testament religion which offend modern Christian idealism by calling them imperfect stages in the "progressive" revelation of God. All the defects of the earlier portions would be found to be done away with in the final and perfect revelation in Christ.

This conception of revelation, however, raised a practical question. If Christians today have the final and perfect revelation in Jesus Christ, why should they spend their time on the earlier and confessedly inferior stages of that revelation? Why not construct Christian theology solely on the basis of the perfect revelation in Christ? The past quarter of a century has seen a widespread demand for a "return to Christ." The ideal of a christocentric theology would relieve theologians of the increasingly formidable task of keeping up with biblical criticism. The appeal to Christian experience seemed to lead immediately and confidently to Christ. The task of theology then would be to discover the convictions created in the experience of the Christian by the revelation which he received through Christ.

This ideal of theology was worked out in detail by several influential German scholars, who were called "Ritschlians" because the original impetus to this type of

[1] E. Y. Mullins, *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression*, p. 148.

thinking was given by Albrecht Ritschl. During the last twenty years of the nineteenth century the creative work of the Ritschlian school was at its height. At this time American students in large numbers went to "study in Germany." Hence the Ritschlian theology came to have considerable vogue in this country. A number of German books embodying the principles of this theology were translated into English and were widely read.[1]

The Ritschlian theologians insisted that theology should be an expression of genuine religious experience. But they saw clearly that if such theology is not to degenerate into a mere subjective expression of opinion, the experience from which it is derived must be correlated definitely to an objective reality which occasions the experience. We may define the aim of the Ritschlian theology as the attempt to make theology genuinely scientific, in the sense that it proceeds by appealing to the testimony of living men rather than to the dictates of mere authoritative canons; but it undertakes to show that the living convictions which yield a Christian theology are caused by the divine redemptive power of Jesus.

In reality the Ritschlian theologians were attempting to reinstate, under conditions of modern thinking, the kind of religious assurance which Luther affirmed to be

[1] Among the most important English versions were Harnack, *History of Dogma* and *What is Christianity?;* Herrmann, *The Communion of the Christian with God;* Lobstein, *Introduction to Protestant Dogmatics;* and Schultz, *Outlines of Christian Apologetics.* The influential French theologian Auguste Sabatier reproduced Ritschlian ideals in his *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion.* Among American teachers, Professor A. C. McGiffert was strongly influenced by Harnack, and President Henry Churchill King by Herrmann. Professor William Newton Clarke apparently independently came to what was very much like the Ritschlian position in his book, *The Use of the Scriptures in Theology.*

possible and necessary for Christian experience under the conditions prevailing in his day. Luther sought to find a basis of absolute religious assurance for people who could no longer believe in the Catholic Church. The Ritschlians were seeking to make possible absolute religious assurance for people who could no longer believe orthodox doctrines. They undertook to define revelation in such a way that open-minded men would gladly welcome it without in any way impairing their freedom to think honestly.

One of the strongest features of the Ritschlian theology was its stern determination to be absolutely faithful to the scientific spirit. It asserted that whatever is critically discovered to be a fact must be accepted as such. There must be no obstacles placed in the way of entire freedom of research. This attitude meant that the Ritschlians were willing to let biblical criticism proceed as far as it wished to go. To the not inconsiderable number of young theological students whose university course had stressed critical methods, there was something refreshing in the permission to employ in the study of the Bible the same processes which were being used in all other fields of inquiry. One of the tragic aspects of the study of theology a generation ago was a theologian's uneasy suspicion that he was not as free as scholars in other departments. He was expected to interpret what he found so as to support a predetermined conclusion. To make theological investigation as free as any other kind of inquiry meant an emancipation of the study of religion.

The complete recognition of the rights of scientific procedure in the study of the Bible, however, had certain significant results. If biblical scholars were to be left free to formulate their conclusions without asking whether

these conclusions did or did not correspond to approved theological doctrines; if, in short, biblical interpretation is to be entirely out of the control of theologians, then it is imperative that the theologians should not be dependent on the results of biblical criticism. Something other than the Bible must be the source of doctrine.

Again, the scientific investigation of the world in which we live was seen to lead to a philosophy very different from that which had been presupposed by orthodox theology. Science seeks to connect every event with the conditions which inevitably make the event what it is. Since observation and exact measurement are easier in the realm of physical processes than elsewhere, the most significant achievements of science have been in the physical realm. But a philosophy based solely on the physical sciences would be some form of "materialism" or "mechanism."

In order to safeguard religion, theologians had quite generally tried to limit or to control science at points where it affects religious beliefs. There was thus a warfare between science and religion, in which religion almost inevitably got the worst of the conflict. The Ritschlian theologians were insistent that in the field of physical science, as well as in the realm of biblical criticism, no obstacles should be placed by theology in the way of free investigation. But if science is to be left free to formulate its own conclusions, the theologians must not be dependent on science for their convictions.

The supremely important thing about Christian experience seemed to the Ritschlians to be an absolute assurance of the reality of salvation. To rest convictions concerning salvation on the uncertain and changing opin-

ions of scientists or on the changing conclusions of biblical scholars would mean that religion would itself become uncertain. The first task for theological thinking, therefore, was held to be to formulate a method which should make religious conclusions independent of the results of either biblical criticism or natural science in order that the religious man may hold his convictions with absolute certainty.

The pathway to this desired theological method was opened by the Ritschlian doctrine of "value-judgments." It was pointed out that the reality of any event is to be found not simply in terms of the causal process which brought it into being but also in terms of the meaning which it has for persons who experience the event. It is, indeed, an important matter to analyze sound and to discover that it consists of air-waves produced by vibrations. Such scientific knowledge is undoubtedly of real service in the construction of musical instruments. But one who is listening to a symphony is less concerned with the physical causes of the sounds than with the significance of those sounds in what he calls "music." It may be important for a composer to know the mathematics of musical sounds, but it is far more important to know the emotional effects of music on the auditors. Religion is to be classed with aesthetics and ethics rather than with the sciences, according to the Ritschlian. Indeed, just as music is a reality discoverable not by science but by aesthetic experience, so mere science would never be able to discover God. God is found in religious experience, not by a process of scientific analysis.

This position relieves the theologian of much perplexity. He is no longer required to prove his assertions after

the manner of scientific proof. Indeed such proof is in the nature of the case impossible. There is an old story of a mathematician who painstakingly read Milton's *Paradise Lost* and then remarked that he could not see that it proved anything. Of course it did not. The meaning of *Paradise Lost* must be appreciated, not proved. Religion must be appreciated, not proved.

The Ritschlian thus insisted that there are two distinct ways of interpreting reality. One way is that employed by science. It establishes causal connections between events. The other way is that of ethical or aesthetic or religious valuation. It establishes the significance of things for the appreciative observer or listener or student. These two ways of interpretation are so different that neither has any competency in the realm of the other. Science can go as far as it likes without affecting religion. Religion can make all its essential affirmations without quarreling with science. In an age when the frequent conflicts between science and theology were occasioning much disturbance, such a solution of the difficulty was warmly welcomed. Indeed, it is still espoused by many persons, especially by some scientists who want to keep scientific research free from ecclesiastical interference but who are also positively interested in religion.[1]

The Ritschlian movement occurred just when the educated world was coming to be keenly aware of the discrepancies between the traditional theological views of reality and the conclusions of modern science. For a long

[1] E.g., Dr. Robert A. Millikan says, "The purpose of science is to develop without prejudice or preconception of any kind a knowledge of the facts, the laws, and the processes of nature. The even more important task of religion, on the other hand, is to develop the consciences, the ideals, and the aspirations of mankind" (*Science and Life*, p. 51).

time well-meaning theologians had been trying to smooth out the difficulties by various sorts of "harmonization" between biblical accounts and modern scientific views. Such "harmonizations" usually left the student with the uneasy sense that the foundations were shifting. If the understanding of what the Bible teaches had to wait until the arrival of modern scientists before the truth was known, and if that truth, when clearly expressed, involved a somewhat radical readjustment of what the Bible seemed on the surface to say, it was evident that the tone of dogmatic certainty could not be maintained. Moreover, what was to prevent advancing science from nibbling more and more at the body of theological truth, with possibly disastrous results?

It was with a sense of relief, therefore, that many perplexed thinkers turned to the way of escape held out by the Ritschlian theologians. Here was a proposal to do away entirely with the embarrassing entanglement between theology and science. Each could now go on its way with entire freedom. Theology, being based on value-judgments, could make its affirmations on undoubted experimental grounds, exactly as science appealed to another aspect of experience. Moreover, the arrangement left theology absolute in its own domain. If religious experience could be vitally related to revelation, the traditional sense of a divine source of Christian beliefs could be maintained.

The proposal to base religious convictions upon value-judgments inevitably met the objection that such a method is too subjective to be reliable. A value-judgment is an expression of *feeling*, and feeling is notoriously fickle. The Ritschlians keenly felt the danger of this kind of uncon-

trolled appeal to feeling. Their estimate of mysticism makes this clear. While admitting that in mysticism there may be much genuine religious experience, the Ritschlians pointed out that the mere mystic was always in danger of being led astray by his feelings. He is prone to leave reality behind him when he feels most religious. In particular, the mystic tends to eliminate the essential differences between *Christian* religious experience and any other kind of emotional exaltation. As Herrmann said: "The mystic is lifted above all that fetters men and brings unrest, for he knows that he has found God. But for that very reason he has left Christ behind."[1]

In the endeavor to guard value-judgments from subjectivism, the Ritschlians insisted that these must be evoked by some indubitably objective fact. The experience of the Christian must be shown to be definitely produced by an objective reality which compels a confession of the actual presence of divine power. Theology is not to consist in the rehearsing of a man's own private ecstasies but in the exposition of an objective gospel which is accessible to all and which is capable of creating the value-judgment known as "religious assurance." Said Lobstein:

> It is not my personal experience which makes the Gospel and which creates authority; on the contrary, it is the Gospel which, rising on the horizon of my history, entering into the sphere of my soul, penetrating to the very center of my life, determines, by its influence and its intrinsic force, an inner and decisive crisis by virtue of which I decide, believe, obey, love, surrender.[2]

Moreover, this gospel upon which the soul relies must not be the product of human speculation. The *idea* of

[1] *The Communion of the Christian with God* (Eng. trans.), p. 30.

[2] *Introduction to Protestant Dogmatics* (Eng. trans.), p. 135.

God constructed by philosophical argument has no religious power. It is demonstrably man's own work and as such has only human power. Salvation must be wrought by a superhuman power. The primary task of theology is to set into clear relief the precise divine gospel from which this salvation comes.

The Ritschlian therefore turned to the historical source of the Christian religion to discover authentic revelation. This, of course, is precisely what both Catholicism and Protestant orthodoxy do. But there is this wide difference between the method pursued by these theologies and the method of the Ritschlian. The Catholic turns to historical origins because he believes that the precise form which Christianity should take was there officially enacted. So, too, the orthodox Protestant takes the entire New Testament as an official statement of what the Christian ought to hold. The Ritschlian, however, turns to these same primitive records in order to discover what in them is of such a *quality* as to evoke the conviction that God is speaking.

What is it in the New Testament which has intrinsic power to compel us to acknowledge a redeeming God? We cannot turn to the mere words of the New Testament, for these can be critically analyzed and discovered to be the creation of men. We cannot rest on the theology of the New Testament writers, for this can be shown to be the outcome of their own religious experience. We must ask what it is that lies behind that experience. In this quest we are ultimately driven back to Jesus as the cause of the New Testament faith and the only reality which can induce the absolute certainty that God is speaking to us. "Jesus himself becomes a real power to us when he reveals

his inner life to us; a power which we recognize as the best thing our life contains."[1] "Whenever we come to see the person of Jesus, then, under the impress of that inner life that breaks through all the veils of the story, we ask no more questions concerning the trustworthiness of the Evangelists."[2]

Here one important emphasis of the Ritschlians should be recalled. They attempted to free theology from the accusation that it consisted of subjective opinions. They therefore insisted that the revelation from which Christian theology is derived should be an undoubted historical fact. They therefore insisted that we should turn to the *historical* Jesus and not to any speculative conception of Christ. Said Herrmann:

> It is not difficult for an imaginative person so to conjure up the Person of Christ before himself that the picture shall take a kind of sensuous distinctness, and then the ground is ready for the contemplative love to Christ. One thinks he sees Jesus Himself, and consequently begins to commune with him. But what such a person communes with in this fashion is not Christ Himself, but a picture that the man's own imagination has put together.[3]

A genuine Christian theology, according to the Ritschlian conception, must start with the religious experience created by the *historical* Jesus. Its foundation must be an objective fact, to which the theologian must constantly return in order to eliminate speculation and subjective emotion. That objective fact is the *real* Jesus. He alone is the foundation of a Christian theology.

What has been said can be made clear by contrasting the Ritschlian use of the New Testament with that of orthodoxy. According to the Ritschlians, these early

[1] Herrmann, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 75.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 281.

Christian records are not to be *described* but are to be *religiously valued.* Both the orthodox theologian and the Ritschlian accept the New Testament as the source of theology. But the orthodox theologian regards what he finds there as an accurate description of reality as it is. The Ritschlian asks what values arise in the Christian consciousness as one reads the New Testament. For example, the orthodox man declares that Jesus is divine because he finds proof-texts affirming the doctrine. The Ritschlian, on the other hand, affirms the divinity of Christ because the picture of Christ given in the New Testament compels us to value him as divine. "It is meaningless to say to men, 'If you wish to be redeemed by Christ you must believe in his Deity.' We ought rather to put the matter thus: 'If you wish to be redeemed by Christ, you must experience in the fact of His Person that God communes with you.'"[1] The Christian must simply let the New Testament writings make their own impression. The convictions arising from this contact with the Scriptures must be beliefs which freely arise in the heart.

We may briefly summarize the theological method expounded by the Ritschlians as follows: In the first place, the unrestricted exercise of critical scientific method is insisted on. We must ask the most searching questions concerning the world of nature. Such critical inquiry leads to the conviction that nature has no redeeming message for man. Nature is ruthless and heartless. Physical science therefore cannot furnish a basis for religious faith. Biblical criticism compels us to abandon the orthodox conception of the Scriptures as supernaturally inerrant documents. We must find a more secure basis for our faith.

[1] Herrmann, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

We must build upon foundations which cannot be affected by critical study. We are thus led to ask whether anywhere in history there has appeared a reality of such a quality that we know it to be divine. In one place, and one only, do we find such a reality. When we see the inner life of the historical Jesus, we find ourselves in the presence of what we inevitably recognize to be divine. Jesus accredits himself. Theology can thus build directly upon the self-evidencing divinity of the inner life of Jesus. The doctrines of faith are drawn from religious experience indeed, but from an experience which has been created and shaped by Jesus himself. The Ritschlian theology has been called "christocentric." By this is meant that instead of appealing to the Bible or to the tenets of philosophy, it appeals directly to Christ. Christian doctrines are the convictions which are begotten in the heart and mind of the man who has met the historical Jesus and has been overmastered by his power.

We thus have theology derived from religious experience; but the experience from which it is derived is not a subjectively uncertain thing. It is an experience which has been created in the religious soul by the divine power of the inner life of the historical Jesus. When the testimony of this experience is taken, it speaks authoritatively concerning God and God's plan for salvation, for the experience itself is divinely created. Theology is thus established on a foundation which cannot be shaken by scientific criticism. Like the theologies of old, it testifies concerning God and God's purposes for man; but unlike them, it believes itself to be employing a strictly critical, empirical method in discovering where the divine is located.

Out of the many books in the United States which represent the appeal to Christ as the norm for theology, we may mention two which, because of their lucidity and literary fame, have had wide influence.

In 1905 Professor William Newton Clarke delivered the Nathaniel William Taylor lectures at the Divinity School of Yale University, on the subject "The Use of the Scriptures in Theology." The title indicates that most religious thinkers were at that time still under the sway of the traditional conception that theology ought to be derived from the Scriptures. Professor Clarke undertook to analyze the situation so as to relieve theologians of the impossible task laid upon them by biblical criticism. He attempted to make the distinction between biblical theology as a whole and Christian theology. He recognized frankly that there are items in the Bible which are not Christian in their quality. "There certainly is non-Christian matter in the Old Testament and for aught that we know there may be in the New."[1] He stated the place of the Scriptures in theology as follows:

> The principle is, that the Christian element in the Scriptures is the indispensable and formative element in Christian theology, and is the only element in the Scriptures which Christian theology is either required or permitted to receive as contributing to its substance.[2]

This Christian element is further defined in terms of the revelation which we gain from Jesus Christ. "That is Christian which enters into or accords with the view of divine realities which Jesus Christ revealed."[3]

It is evident all through Dr. Clarke's discussions that

[1] *The Use of the Scriptures in Theology*, p. 53.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 50. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 56.

he wanted to feel that theological doctrines are derived from revelation rather than from mere human experience. He used expressions which indicated his belief that when a Christian theory has been constructed on the basis of the appeal to Christ, such theory will be so completely true that it will never need to be revised; i.e., it will be practically infallible. He asked, "What then is this ascertained and sure significance of Jesus Christ which *is never to be changed and which no future modifications of our knowledge can abolish for us?*"[1] As he contemplated the outcome of the discrimination which he had suggested, he pictured a permanent theory of absolute Divine authority:

> Before the great distinction can be made, it is evidently necessary that that rich body of truth of which I spoke in the second lecture should be more clearly perceived as something by itself. That body of truth concerning God and ourselves is the *permanent element* in theology also, and all else we must regard as not only passing but past. The distinction between the transient and the abiding in the Bible has never yet been properly wrought out. The establishing and defining of that distinction will determine the use of the Scriptures in theology. . . . .
>
> When the passing and the permanent, the old and the new, the non-Christian and the Christian, have been well distinguished, theology will have the *unmixed divine* for its material.[2]

It is true that in places he recognized that it is not so simple a matter to determine in final fashion precisely what Christ reveals. In reply to those who ask whether the appeal to Christ will not inevitably embody some measure of subjective judgment, he replied:

> The way to know a Christian thought is the same as the way to perceive the blue in the sky,—look at it and discern the quality.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 57. (Italics mine.)

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 125–26. (Italics mine.)

We may misjudge, but that is the fault of our poor senses, not of the method of spiritual sense-perception. There is no way but to judge, and recognize.[1]

This admission of a possibly fallible human judgment in discerning the revelation in Christ creates of course precisely the same difficulty with Dr. Clarke's proposal as that created for orthodox Protestantism by the admission of fallible human interpretation of the Bible. But the appeal to an authoritative Christ preserves the attitude of reliance on a divine authority and thus obviates the uncertainty caused by a mere appeal to "experience."

Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick in 1924 delivered the Lyman Beecher lectures at Yale on the subject "The Modern Use of the Bible." In the nearly twenty years between his volume containing these lectures and Dr. Clarke's book, the results of historical biblical criticism had become more familiar. The students in a modern theological seminary are entirely accustomed to the thought that the utterances of the Bible represent honest and straightforward expressions of ideas current at the time when the writer lived. The Bible then, of course, embodies conceptions belonging to primitive stages in the history of civilization. With this background it is possible for Dr. Fosdick to deal far more trenchantly with biblical conceptions. With relentless honesty he portrays biblical ideas precisely as they lay in the minds of biblical writers and not in terms of accommodation to modern notions. This squarely raises the question how a literature which embodies so many outgrown ideas is to be used in the construction of a modern theology.

The solution which Dr. Fosdick proposes is found in

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

the title of the fourth lecture: "Abiding Experiences and Changing Categories." He undertakes to show that when we get back of a biblical utterance to the fundamental experience which it interprets we discover that that experience is essentially identical with experiences of modern men. People were sick in ancient times as they are sick today; but whereas the ancient world interpreted sickness in terms of a visitation of evil demons, our modern world interprets it in terms of infection or imperfect organic processes. The true use of the Bible would be to take the abiding experiences which the ancient writers expressed in terms of ancient categories and to reinterpret them in terms of categories which are real to modern men.

> This, then, is the conclusion of the matter. It is impossible that a Book written two to three thousand years ago should be used in the twentieth century A.D. without having some of its forms of thought and speech translated into modern categories. When, therefore, a man says, I believe in the victory of God on earth but not in the physical return of Jesus, I believe in the reality of sin and evil but not in the visitation of demons, I believe in the nearness and friendship of the divine Spirit, but I do not think of that experience in terms of individual angels, only superficial dogmatism can deny that that man believes the Bible. It is precisely the thing at which the Bible was driving that he does believe. Life eternal, the coming of the kingdom, the conquest of sin and evil, the indwelling and sustaining presence of the Spirit—these are the gist of the matter once set forth in ancient terms, but abidingly valid in our terms, too, and valid also in other terms than ours in which our children's children may express them.[1]

A serious question, however, arises in connection with the phrase "abiding experiences." How are we to know just what experiences are abiding? Moreover, are the "categories" so separate from "experiences" that we can

[1] Fosdick, *The Modern Use of the Bible*, p. 129.

precisely analyze the problem as Dr. Fosdick suggests? Is not any man's experience all of a piece? What Dr. Fosdick has really done is to select certain experiences which are typical of our modern life and to find analogous experiences in the Bible. But the "categories" in which modern experiences are interpreted are integral parts of modern experience itself. We have in this analysis of Dr. Fosdick's a recognition of the popular longing for something like the unchanging and infallible norms of the older theology. Since ideas prove not to be unchangeable, the attempt is made to discover "abiding experiences." Dr. Fosdick, however, also uses another phrase, "reproducible experiences," which has a more creative significance.

The real anchorage for these experiences is found in the last lectures of Dr. Fosdick's book, which are devoted to an interpretation of the significance of Jesus. It is there pointed out that a Christian is one who looks to Christ to create in him the right experience. The advance of Dr. Fosdick over the position of Dr. Clarke is seen in the fact that whereas for the earlier theologian it was the *ideas* of Jesus that were normative, for the present-day writer it is the *religious experience* created in us by our understanding of Jesus. The Christian, according to Dr. Fosdick, is one who "takes Jesus seriously." The experience of Jesus is one which he intended to be reproduced in his followers.

For as one goes back to the Bible now in search of its repeatable experiences, it is clear that whatever else loyalty to the Book may mean, one element must be put first: the spirit and quality of Jesus were meant to be reproduced in his followers. Nothing is Christian which leaves that out or makes that secondary. In the New Testament the Master's life, like music, was meant to be reproduced. As a score of Bach or Beethoven, into which the com-

poser's love of harmony once was poured, is meant to be caught up by each new generation and played over again, interpreted by organs, orchestras, choirs, by old instruments that may abide and by new ones that may be invented, so the life of Jesus in the New Testament was meant to be reproduced in all sorts of circumstances, by all sorts of temperaments, until the whole earth should be full of it.[1]

The emancipating consequences of this theological method are very great. No longer is the theologian bound to the method of the scribes. If the essence of Christianity consists in a freely given loyalty to what is found in the character and teachings of Jesus, the task of theology comes to be that of thinking through any and every question in the light of the ideals engendered by discipleship to Christ. The theologian is as free as any scientist in his attitude. No church has jurisdiction over his conclusions. The Bible may be allowed to say what it says without exercising compulsion over the conclusions of the theologian. The modern religious man, like the apostle Paul of yore, can "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free."

One crucial point, however, should be noted. This theological method is usually concerned to preserve in some fashion the older feeling of security, due to the belief that religious convictions are divinely sanctioned. The Ritschlians were consciously attempting to rescue a theology which insists on scientific procedure from resting its case entirely on the empirical discoveries of man. Christianity is not a discovery; it is a revelation. The christocentric test relieves theologians of the embarrassment caused if one tries to maintain a biblical norm in the face of modern

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 195.

scholarship. But its validity depends on the conviction that in Christ we have a divine ultimate.

If this position be taken, it is then of supreme importance to be able to identify precisely the character of this divine Christ. For if it should turn out to be the case that we are dealing only with human estimates of Christ; if the historical data are such that there is room for wide differences of opinion as to the precise character of Jesus, it will be difficult to secure that "unmixed divine" which Dr. Clarke believed would emerge by the use of the christocentric principle. This point will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Meanwhile we may note certain significant consequences of the application of the christocentric principle to the discussion of Christian doctrines. These consequences have entered to a large extent into the general religious thinking of our day.

If, as Dr. Clarke declared, only that which is Christian in quality has any place in a system of Christian doctrine, the familiar teachings of Christian theology must all be tested so as to ascertain whether they possess the necessary quality. Do all the traditional doctrines measure up to a christocentric test?

The Ritschlian theologians discovered that when this norm is applied there are many factors of the inherited Christian system which cannot be retained. Partly on the basis of this proposed test and partly as a result of historical study, these theologians came to the conclusions that there had entered into Christian theology many elements derived from non-Christian sources. The renowned church historian, Harnack, interpreted the history of Christianity during the first three centuries as a

process of what he called "hellenization." He showed that as the Christian movement grew in the ancient world it absorbed Greek ideas and customs and incorporated these into the church system. It was his conviction that the absorption of these hellenistic items meant a gradual obscuration or perversion of the Christian message. He pointed out that disputes concerning the metaphysical aspects of the Trinity displaced Jesus' emphasis on the Fatherhood of God. He showed how sacramental conceptions of salvation obscured the simple ethical message of Jesus. He made it clear that Greek philosophy had substituted for the historical Jesus the highly speculative concept of the Logos.

In the light of this analysis it appeared that much of what we have called "Christian theology" was actually derived from non-Christian sources. If, then, we attempt to make theology include only that which is truly Christian in quality, we shall be compelled to eliminate a considerable content of the older theology.

What are the main alterations which result from the application of this principle?

1. The appeal to Christ logically ought to take the place of the older appeal to the Scriptures. Doctrines should be derived from the revelation which is made through Christ rather than from the Bible as such. It is interesting, however, to observe that the traditional habit of introducing the study of theology by a discussion of the authority of the Scripture has persisted. The attempt is made to retain, in more or less vague fashion, to be sure, some sort of assertion of the authority of the Scriptures; but the conclusions of critical scholarship are sufficiently recognized to invalidate any very strong notion of au-

thority. One way out is to declare that the Bible is the most original and reliable source of information concerning Christ who is the supreme source of theology.

As the Christian revelation *par excellence*, Christ is the source upon which the Christian life in every age must feed. But we get at Christ most directly through the Bible. In the Old Testament we have the spiritual food upon which his inner life was nourished, the divine revelation which he felt himself called to fulfil. In the Gospels we have the record of his life, and the original form of his teaching; in the Epistles and the Revelation, the influence of his spirit upon the men who stood nearest to him. His personality is central in the Bible, and binds its different parts into a unity.

The intimate connection with Christ explains the qualities which Christian faith finds in the Bible. It explains the clearness with which it presents the truths man needs to know, the adequacy with which it answers his questions and meets his needs, and the moving power with which it lays hold upon his conscience, and constrains his will. In these qualities (the perspicuity, sufficiency, and efficacy of the older Protestant dogmatics) resides the authority of the Scripture. The life-giving power of the Master is found in the book which witnesses of him, and is the explanation of its continuing influence in the Christian church.[1]

2. When we come to the doctrine of God, the outcome is much simpler. Christian theology has always placed the loving character of God foremost. It has, however, surrounded this central affirmation with a great many speculative details. If we apply the christocentric test and ask what kind of being is revealed to us by Jesus, it becomes at once evident that we gain no light here concerning some of the metaphysical aspects of traditional doctrine of God. Jesus said nothing about the Trinity. He gave no list of divine attributes. He represented God as a fatherly being always expressing a personal interest in men. Following this clue, Christian theology would

[1] W. A. Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, p. 55.

have the simple task of setting forth the concept of God as love. Starting from this conception, the sternness of the older Calvinistic theology disappears. The key to an understanding of God has sometimes been furnished in the statement "God is like Jesus."

So far as religious feelings are concerned, this conception of God is highly satisfactory. It has, however, one serious difficulty. It rests exclusively on faith in God as revealed in Christ. But this appeal is to a God virtually unrelated to the world which modern science is interpreting. The Ritschlian theologians were eager to make Christian convictions independent of critical scientific processes. They held that theology was to be based entirely upon value-judgments. A Christian theology would simply express the value-judgments derived from the revelation in Christ.

This desire to keep science and religion distinct meant the restriction of theological statements to the realm of personal redemption; and the process of redemption was portrayed on the basis of the impressions made on the religious man by the historical Jesus. But Jesus portrayed the world in prescientific fashion. It was a world in which God could at any time act arbitrarily without the complications of a system of natural law. It was a world in which angels and demons were active, in which miracles occurred, in which redemptive acts might be expected whenever the loving God chose to assert his power.

The mind trained in the processes of modern science is likely to feel that such a theory lacks convincing background. It seems to appeal to a kind of "faith" which borders closely on sentimentality For tough-minded individuals this pathway for faith seems to beg the whole

question. It seems to substitute for a stern critical way of facing the inexorable facts of the universe a pleasant dream derived from religious sentiment. The question as to the existence of God has become very acute in the discussions of the younger generation today. This generation has grown up under the sway of critical scientific methods of thinking rather than under the sway of the old-fashioned piety. To such minds the methods of arriving at conclusions outlined in this chapter are unconvincing.

3. The application of the proposed test to the doctrine of Christ brought important changes. It eliminated at once the metaphysical framework of the older Christology. There is nothing in the revelation made by Jesus which suggests the intricate doctrines of "natures" and "substance" found in the traditional creeds. The significance of Christ is found exclusively in the realm of religious experience. His saving work consists in this power to make men aware of the reality of a loving God. In the light of this revelation the necessity for Christ's death as an expiatory sacrifice disappears. God does not need to be reconciled to man. He is always seeking to save man. The intricate doctrines of the atonement thus cease to have any logical place in the relationship between God and man. The redemptive work of Christ consists in revealing to man the loving character of God so that man trusts him and dedicates his life to the Kingdom of God, which is the moral purpose of God as revealed in Christ.

The conception of the deity of Christ from this point of view consists in recognizing in him a spiritual power so great that it can be attributed only to God. To quote Lobstein:

On the one hand, in a word, he who has found in Jesus Christ the God with whom he is in communion, he who has found pardon for his sins in this communion with God, has found life and salvation; he is assured that the light which raises us above the world and delivers us from the world does not come from the world. The experience of the saving power of Christ proves to the believer that the Head of the Kingdom of God and the author of redemption could not have been the prey of death.

On the other hand, evangelical faith affirms with a certitude none the less absolute that the divine life incarnated in Jesus Christ and communicated by him to humanity proceeds from a divine source, which is the pure emanation of a power whose final cause and secret we cannot find in ourselves. That is the imperious postulate of the Christian faith which must impute to the sovereign and all-powerful grace of the Heavenly Father the gift that he has made to us in the person of his only Son. The appearance of the originator and dispenser of divine light implies and necessarily presupposes a special manifestation of God, a creative and sanctifying intervention of his Spirit, which in the midst of humanity has created a new personality, breaking the bonds of sin and inaugurating upon the earth the Kingdom of Heaven.[1]

It is evident that such a conception does not include some of the attributes deemed essential to the older Christology.

4. In other departments of theology similar changes are made as a result of the appeal to Christ. Discussions concerning the historical origin of man are idle. There is no information to be gained on this point by asking what convictions we derive from our contact with Christ. This would mean that theology is not concerned either to affirm or deny the account in Genesis. All that a Christian theology could state is that when a man sincerely meets Jesus face to face he knows himself to be an unworthy sinner needing forgiveness and he discovers in

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 228–29.

Jesus the forgiving grace of God. Christian salvation thus comes to be a practical experience. It means simply the development of such a life as will keep one in fellowship with Jesus and thus through him in communion with God.

Again the outcome of salvation is to be realized now rather than in some future world. Questions concerning the next life are inevitably speculative. The Christian trusts his God who has redeemed him here to take care of him at death. The outcome of the saved life is not so much a guaranty of entrance into future bliss as it is a present experience of a life whose quality is eternal.

5. This practical emphasis means that the appeal to Christ carries with it a new appreciation of ethical and social virtues. The revelation which comes through Christ is fundamentally that of the supremacy of moral living. To be saved by Christ therefore means to become a completely moral person. The supreme test to which all Christian doctrine must submit is whether any given doctrine brings one into closer relationship with Jesus. Whatever may be said concerning the logical and critical difficulties of this type of theology, its unwavering moral emphasis must be acknowledged.

The type of theology considered in this chapter is undoubtedly the most prevalent form of liberalism today. It furnishes a practical way in which the traditional religious loyalties can be preserved, while at the same time it opens the way for a recognition of the inevitable conclusions of scientific inquiry. Religious loyalty has been trained through centuries of discipline to demand a divine source for theological mandates. Christ is universally regarded as such a divine source. Those who are unable to accept the Catholic theory that Christ estab-

lished an authoritative church, can still appeal to Christ's divine authority while adopting a critical attitude toward the church. Those who, because of biblical scholarship, are unable to assent to the doctrine of scriptural infallibility, can still look to Christ as the authoritative Lord of conscience, while adopting entire freedom in their reading of the Bible. Differences of theological opinion which might cause serious friction can be sunk beneath the wave of an emotional appeal to make Christ the supreme and sole authority. Under cover of this appeal, very diverse points of view may find at least a seeming unity. In enterprises where it is important to obtain unified practical support—such as missionary undertakings or the social aims of the Federation of Churches—the appeal to Christ as the sole absolute authority is extremely effective as a means of comprehending both conservatives and liberals in the same organization. Christocentric theology has served a very useful purpose in tiding men over the period of rapid changes in theology until they could accustom themselves to the demands of newer methods of investigation and thought.

But, after all, this unifying appeal conceals rather than clarifies the problems of theological thinking. A survey of current theological discussions reveals the fact that the authority of Christ is being invoked by representatives of very different doctrinal points of view. The Roman Catholic confidently appeals to Christ as the divine founder of the Catholic ecclesiastical system. Fundamentalists discredit the methods of higher criticism by declaring that Jesus taught the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and the Davidic authorship of the Psalms. Liberal theologians cite Jesus' attitude toward Sabbath

legislation as evidence that he was at heart a liberal. Millenarians quote Jesus' teachings concerning his visible second coming as authority for a premillennial philosophy; and theologians who have abandoned that type of eschatology are eager to show that this was no part of the essential teachings of Jesus.

Moreover, the historical investigations of New Testament scholars are compelling us to set aside theological prepossessions and to attempt to look at Jesus through the eyes of his contemporaries. It is now coming to be widely recognized that Jesus' conception of religion was couched in prevalent conceptions of his day, some of which are no longer thought to be valid. In particular, it is at least possible that he expected a speedy end of this world by a divinely caused catastrophe. History has shown such a conception to have been mistaken. If, however, the modern theologian cannot be sure of the theology of Jesus on this important point, just what becomes of the appeal to Jesus?

It would seem that here we are on the threshold of a development which is similar to that through which theology has passed in its conception of the authority of the Bible. Modernist theologians no longer attempt to reproduce biblical doctrines. They derive invaluable stimulus from the lofty religious ideals found in the Bible, but they also frankly recognize that there are some aspects of biblical doctrines which cannot be taken over into present-day thinking. The Bible is permitted honestly to say what it actually says; and the modern theologian also is expected to say what he honestly believes, whether it does or does not coincide with biblical teachings. In precisely the same way, we are coming to the place where

Christians will learn about Jesus, not to make him a formal authority, but rather to gain inspiration for the creative task of constructing theological doctrines which shall be as honest and as worthy for our day as were the teachings of Jesus for his day. The appeal to Jesus, like the appeal to the Bible, will then consist in recognizing the mighty stimulus to noble life and profound thought which is derived from acquaintance with Jesus; but the expression of this stimulus will be in the attempt to think creatively in terms of modern life, rather than to make thinking conform to an authoritative pattern.

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VIII

THE THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE NATURAL WORLD

One of the important features of Christian thinking until comparatively recently was its depreciation of the "natural" world. Religion was thought to have for its primary purpose the preparation of men for a future life. Christianity was believed to have originated, not as a "natural" historical movement, but by specific divine institution. The Bible was defined as having been produced by the supernatural power of the Spirit of God on the writers. Man's life on this earth was looked upon as a "probation" to fit him for eternal life in an "other" world. It was inevitable, therefore, that primary attention in theological thinking should be given to the items in which the supernatural was most evident. The Bible was valued because of its supernatural origin. The significance of Jesus was sought primarily in his supernatural birth and his superhuman constitution. Man's salvation was thought to be dependent, not on the forces of this natural world, but on the efficiency of sacraments or of an experience of supernatural regeneration. Religious sentiment expressed itself in such a hymn as: "I'm but a stranger here. Heaven is my home."

During the past two or three generations, however, our attitude toward this present world has significantly changed. To an increasing extent we are coming to feel very much at home here. Particularly within the past

fifty years the rapid progress of scientific control and the multiplication of surprising inventions have made our world a supremely interesting place. It is precisely this greatly enhanced interest in the present world which makes it difficult for religion to secure a keen concern in matters which formerly were foremost in the thinking of nearly everyone.

Moreover, the steady influence of critical methods of studying religion has been to weaken the appeal to the supernatural. While in most theological books the older vocabulary is to a certain extent retained, the content is carefully shaped so as to avoid too definite an affirmation of distinctly supernatural explanations. The evolutionary conception has so altered the picture of the way in which our earth came into existence that the older doctrine of creation by fiat has well-nigh disappeared. To say that evolution is simply "God's method of creation" means that creation has been identified with what the scientist calls "natural processes." Miracles have come to be "problems" for modern theologians, and the truth of Christianity is not made to depend on the affirmation of the miraculous. The Bible, as studied historically, is seen to be the expression of human religious development rather than a supernaturally communicated message. To an increasing extent thoughtful religious men are turning definitely away from emphasis on the supernatural and are interpreting religion as a natural human experience.

One of the outstanding features of the nineteenth century was the development of a philosophy which gives a religious interpretation to the *natural* order, frankly admitting that this is the only realm of reality which we

know. Instead of picturing God as the transcendent creator and ruler, essentially aloof from this world, this philosophy undertook to explain the entire universe in terms of the activity of an immanent divine control. Professor A. C. McGiffert has described this new theology as follows:

> As ever new forces were discovered in nature, and phenomenon after phenomenon formerly traced to divine activity was given a natural explanation, there seemed less and less place left for God and less and less reason to believe in him. Unless a revolution occurred in the prevalent idea of God and new ways of looking at him were found, the growing scepticism of the age must in course of time become universal. That it did not was due in no small part to the conception of divine immanence which has done much to make continued faith in God possible to intelligent men of modern times.[1]

The form which religious inquiry takes under the guidance of this modern philosophy is very different from the form which the theologians have usually employed. Traditional theology inquired, "What message comes by revelation from the supernatural realm?" This inquiry meant that the primary task of the theologian was to identify the authentic channel of revelation. But since the newer monism has no supernatural, it would be meaningless to seek a communication from it. The question asked by one who has come to think in terms of this philosophy would be, "What is the spiritual meaning of man's relation to the infinite universe which produced him and of which he is an integral part?" The theologian, then, has the task of discovering the religious resources of the one universe in which we live and move and have our being.

[1] *The Rise of Modern Religious Ideas*, p. 188.

This new philosophy bases religious interpretations on an idealistic interpretation of all reality. It insists that there can be no such thing as knowledge which leaves out of account the knower. Since mind is inevitably involved in all knowable reality and since it is mind that organizes our knowledge, it is concluded that mind must be the organizing element in all reality. It may, then, be assumed that "the laws of thought are the laws of reality."

Proceeding on this hypothesis, idealistic philosophy interprets the universe as the expression of Intelligence. But this Intelligence is active and creative rather than contemplative. God, thus conceived, is the eternal creative organizer of reality rather than the transcendent Being who contemplates a finished universe created by him in the past. The *immanence* of God is emphasized. The world in which we live is the dynamic expression of divine activity. As Professor Rufus M. Jones says: "I think of the universe, not as a dull, dead, mechanical thing, but rather, when it is viewed in its deepest nature, as something spiritual."[1]

It is impossible in this brief sketch to go into the somewhat elaborate philosophical considerations underlying this type of thought. Nor is it necessary to do so in order to understand the theological interpretations based on philosophical idealism.

It is important, however, to point out that this starting-point radically changes theological method. It seems to its advocates to simplify enormously the problems of religious thinking and to make religious experience much

[1] Essay entitled "The Eternal Goodness," in *My Idea of God* (edited by Joseph Fort Newton), p. 53.

more natural and profound than did the conceptions of the older theology.

The key to the significant features of this new theology is found in the primary doctrine that God is universally present in all the universe and in all history. The older theology resorted to some special revelation of a transcendent God as the basis of all religious convictions. This meant that some special section of history, or some particular event was singled out as the channel through which God communicated himself to man. The defense of Christian convictions thus consisted in showing the uniqueness of the crucial elements in Christianity.

But the steady influence of critical scholarship has been to break down these partitions. Scientific understanding of anything means that it is classified with other similar things. It is only when a thing can be subsumed under a class of objects, the reality of which is recognized, that the reality of the thing in question is established. To study the Bible as one would study any other literature means to classify it with "natural" utterances of men. In similar fashion recent studies of religious experience classify it with experience in general. It is true that many Christian writers try to defend some semblance of the older doctrine of special uniqueness, but the weight of modern scientific procedure is so great that these attempts are coming to be evidently simply a sparring for time in which to make an adjustment.

The new philosophy, then, at one stroke does away with the necessity for a doubtful and really superfluous apologetic. Instead of picturing a "natural" world so largely devoid of religious significance that God must create extraordinary means for manifesting himself, the

advocates of this philosophy start with the conception of a universe which owes its existence in its parts and as a whole to the indwelling creative activity of God. Instead of being compelled first to vindicate the authenticity of certain alleged special channels of revelation, with the constant danger that upon examination these special channels should turn out to be no different from the other processes in the universe, the religious man may begin anywhere. Let him investigate whatever he will, and he will be led to the recognition of the immanent God. "The religion of an idealist is not a forlorn hope, or a defence of last ditches, but an enjoyment of all the emotions of sovereignty."[1] This universe in which we live and move and have our being is everywhere capable of revealing God to those who have discernment.

> Earth's crammed with heaven,
> And every common bush afire with God.

This conception of religion as the most reasonable interpretation of the meaning of the natural world releases a great enthusiasm. No longer must theology be on the defensive against critical scholarship. On the contrary, this new theology insists that we must start with the most searching kind of criticism. It welcomes all that science can tell us about the universe, because the more marvelous the story of science, the more glorious is the religious interpretation of the meaning of the processes lying behind that which science describes. This position enables theology to take its stand beside the free disciples of modern scholarship, asking no favors, claiming no inaccessible "supernatural" realm, but simply pene-

[1] R. B. Perry. *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, p. 164.

trating by the use of candid inquiry into the ultimate meaning of the universe which science and philosophy recognize as indubitably real. No wonder that so many thoughtful persons, seeing the precarious nature of the apologetic for the older exclusive conception of Christianity, should have welcomed the new approach.

The theology of immanence seemed to those who felt its power like a new Reformation, comparable in significance to the Protestant movement. Luther rejoiced because he had done away with the cumbersome ecclesiastical system which stood between man and God: every believer could be a priest with direct access to God. But with the development of orthodoxy, the Protestant system came to be almost as formidable an intermediary as the Catholic. In order to experience religion it was necessary to "accept" a conception of the Bible which in modern times occasions serious perplexity. The loyal Christian was expected to affirm—"for substance of doctrine," at least—theological statements which were difficult to understand, such as the doctrine of the Trinity. Salvation was to be secured only by a "faith" which assented to a doctrine of atonement that caused ethical misgivings for thoughtful persons. The traditional theological system really stood between men and God so as to make religion seem somewhat artificial and formal.

The new theology of immanence abolished all this system. God is to be found directly in the processes of the world-order with which we are in immediate contact. His organizing activity is discovered to be the real explanation of everything. The religious man is released from the obligation to "accept" an authorized system as the means of experiencing religion. He can directly dis-

cover God in the environment of his everyday life. As Professor H. A. Youtz has said:

> The penalty of this failure to think the living God in terms of the conceptions of today is unreality in religious language and anemia in religious living. The penalty of leading a theological student to his God-idea through the stereotyped doctrines and systems of the past is too often to leave him—by his own confession—"without a message for the present."
>
> There are saints a plenty who can find God in the Old Testament, and sages who can find God in the Greek lyrics, who have little sense of the presence of God in modern life. That is the dangerous heresy of the religious life,—to trace God's presence and purpose in another age, and not be confident of his presence and outworking purposes in the life of our own day![1]

From this point of view, the task of theological thinking is to show how the presence and activity of God may be apprehended in all reality. The world in which we live is not a mere place of "probation." It is the expression of God's life and purpose. "The starting point of the New Theology is recognition of the truth that God is expressing himself through his world."[2] The Christian doctrine of divine Providence is thus given in the very structure of things. It does not need to be proved. All that is necessary is to discern it.

This dynamic interpretation of the world makes a positive place for the conception of evolution. All reality is essentially the expression of the divine activity. God is constantly creating and organizing his world. Through this divine purposive indwelling, all the diversities of the world are unified in the comprehensive purpose of God. We may know that all things work together for good.

[1] *The Enlarging Conception of God*, pp. 30 and 35.

[2] R. J. Campbell, *The New Theology*, p. 64.

The seeming evils which we observe are simply maladjustments which will be overcome in the process of evolution. Our own finiteness and failure may be turned into moral victory if we permit our lives to be taken up into the divine purpose. The optimism of this theology of divine immanence furnishes the basis for a simple and direct gospel of divine aid.

It is evident that this type of religious interpretation could be worked out without very much use of the more intricate Christian doctrines. Since God's activity is to be found anywhere and everywhere, there is no need of restricting theology to what the Bible tells us concerning religion. Indeed, since the full realization of the purposes of God can be apprehended only as the entire scope of his activity is considered, a theology which bases itself on merely a section of history is to that extent incomplete. Nevertheless a real insight into the deeper meaning of even incomplete expressions of religion can furnish a glimpse of the all-inclusive truth. Thus the familiar Christian doctrines have been for the most part retained, but they have received an interpretation which would bring them into harmony with a universally valid philosophy.

The word "revelation" is used, but its meaning is extended to indicate that God is always revealing himself through his never-ceasing activity in organizing and upholding the universe.

> Revealed truth cannot belong to a different order from all other truth that appeals to the human consciousness and with which it is the province of philosophy to deal. . . . . For however inferior the faculty of recognizing and verifying may be to that of discovering or excogitating, recognition and verification would be impossible if the truth recognized did not belong to the same order

with all other truth, or if the mind that receives and authenticates were not essentially akin to the mind that communicates.[1]

It is evident that if the laws of thought are the laws of reality, any revelation of reality will be in terms of thought which may be apprehended by any rational being. The great revealers in human history are the men of profound insight.

Again, man's need of salvation is affirmed. But the maladjustment between man and God is not thought of as a moral rebellion. It is rather man's inevitable finiteness in an infinite universe. What man needs, in order to be saved, is to overcome this finiteness; and this can be accomplished when he apprehends the full meaning of the immanence of God and permits his mind and purposes to be dominated by this insight.

The difference between the dualistic conceptions of traditional theology and this newer monism is most clearly seen in the interpretation given to the character and function of Jesus. The older theology defined Christ fundamentally in terms of his *unlikeness* to other men. Christ was declared to be essentially divine, while other men were essentially human; and divine and human were mutually exclusive categories. The new philosophy, however, with its doctrine of divine immanence, sees God in everything. God is therefore in every person. All men are children of God. Jesus realized the presence of God completely, while other men realize it only incompletely; but it is the same divinity which appears in all. Dr. R. J. Campbell put it very tersely when he wrote: "Jesus was God, but so are we. He was God because his life was the expression of divine love; we too are one with God in so

[1] John Caird, *The Fundamental Ideas of Christianity*, I, 17.

far as our lives express the same thing."[1] Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick expresses the same idea when he says:

> Yet the God who was in Jesus is the same God who is in us. You cannot have one God and two kinds of divinity.
>
> If Jesus is divine, and if divinity hedges us all about like the vital forces which in winter wait underneath the frozen ground until Spring comes, that is a gospel! Then the incarnation in Christ is the prophecy and hope of God's indwelling in every one of us.[2]

Put in other words, this is simply the working out of the fundamental conception of the universal immanence of God. The incarnation is not an isolated and unique event. It is the perpetual expression of God's self-giving creative activity. The whole evolutionary process is, in a way, the incarnation of God in finite form. But for the most part we humans are impressed by the finiteness of a thing rather than the infinite significance which it has when rightly related to the Absolute source of everything which exists. In Christ we may see in perfection that principle of the divine incarnation which is really the explanation of all that exists. From this insight it is evident that Christianity is the supremely true interpretation of the universe, the most perfect philosophy—not popular, pictorial Christianity with its crudities, but the ultimate, absolute Christianity which is discerned in the real inner meaning of the historical doctrines.

In similar fashion the doctrine of atonement receives a new interpretation. Since God is always creatively interrelated with the world and with man, we do not start with a doctrine of an angry God who needs to be propitiated. The doctrine of atonement starts rather with the

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 92.

[2] *The Modern Use of the Bible*, pp. 272 and 270.

fact of the finiteness of man. Man has within himself the potentiality of divinity, but his finiteness hinders him from realizing his divine possibilities. God, however, does not permit a permanent thwarting of man's highest life. He constantly, through the eternal process of incarnation, enters into man's life to lift him above his past self and enable him to share the glory of the divine life. Supremely "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself"; but the principle revealed in Christ is a principle everywhere effective. The atonement is a sublime eternal truth.

This theology of the divine immanence, when philosophically worked out, expressed itself in rather abstruse terms. It was intellectually very satisfactory; for it furnished a way of thinking out a unitary organization of the manifold kinds of reality in the universe. But, in so far as it yielded to philosophical interests, it spoke a language unfamiliar to people in general. It had great influence, however, over minds that were eager to find a direct way of understanding religion, so that theology should be freed from the formalism and artificiality due to the stereotyped method of appealing to some "authority." Here seemed to be a religious interpretation which starts from the facts of the world in which we live and comes directly and naturally to the sublime conception of an all-embracing immanent God.

Practically, this type of religious thinking has a powerful sentimental appeal. The conception of God as the immanent power eternally organizing the universe and always enabling what is finite to realize a larger share in the infinite is easily translated into the picture of a loving Father, always close to us, and always seeking to enter

into our life in order to transform it and lift it up. Religion thus comes to be a constant apprehending of the infinite presence which enfolds us. The gospel of this religion is so simple and so direct that it can be proclaimed with a profound appeal. Take the following from a popular book which sets forth the conception of the divine immanence:

> The wall of partition is broken down, the veil is rent in twain; we live in the Holy Presence, since there is no other place to live. With Browning, we feel that the atmosphere "Is the clear, dear breath of God who loveth us." The Pavement on which we walk is the power of the Great Will bearing us up. Likewise, the buildings along the street are more of His beneficent energies, providing shelter and rest for His loved ones. Our bodies are also His energies, highly sensitized, through which we become beautifully aware of our surroundings. All the vitality in the quivering beams of ships and all the force in their engines, is but the power of a Will, and the Will is the Father of our spirits. Leaving out of mind for the present the thought of the vast universe, measure, if you can, the ocean in its breadth and depth, which in its ceaseless rising and falling raises and lowers ship-cities as if they were snowflakes; and then remember that, if rightly applied, there is power enough in each cupful of water to destroy a ship, and that all the energy of the boundless worlds is but the will of Him in whom we "live and move and have our being." Having done this, if you are not something less than a man, you will fall down and adore in wonder, love and praise. To be brought face to face with God in the beauty and awfulness of nature is the only cure for the irreverence of this generation.[1]

It is in certain religious movements which have broken away from the formality of standardized Christianity that this theology of immanence has had its largest influence. The theology of orthodox Christianity has laid primary emphasis on the alienation between man and God

[1] R. L. Swain, *What and Where is God*, pp. 66–67.

because of man's sin. Thus the immanentist conception has found considerable opposition because of the prevalence of a different pattern of thought. It is in non-ecclesiastical literature, especially in poetry, that we find this new mode of aspiration appearing in unhampered form. But it has also found a warm welcome in the teachings of Christian Science and in the literature expounding what is known as "New Thought."

Christian Science is really a thorough-going elaboration of the doctrine of divine immanence, with practical application to the problem of getting rid of the ills which afflict man's life. "Christian Science is a clear and definite system based on certain fundamental propositions defining the nature of God. Every deduction, from beginning to end of the system, is the logical outcome of these primary statements concerning the Divine nature."[1]

According to the teaching of *Science and Health,* God is the all-inclusive Being. "The starting-point of Science is that God, Spirit, is All-in-all, and that there is no other might or Mind,—that God is Love, and therefore He is divine Principle." There cannot be anything which is contrary to God's nature, for God is the all-inclusive reality. What man believes to be evil in the world of his experience is due to misinterpretation of the nature of reality. There is a direct way in which to be rid of all evils. This way consists of eliminating from one's thinking all the "error" which "mortal mind" suggests. In other words, it means the ability to read the presence of God in everything.

It is important to note how completely Christian Sci-

[1] C. Lilias Ramsay, C.S.B., in the article "Christian Science in Hastings," *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.*

ence has eliminated the traditional dualism which affirmed two worlds—a "natural" realm and a "supernatural." For the Christian Scientist there is only one realm of reality, and that is to be interpreted in thoroughly idealistic terms. The use of the word "Science" is significant. Salvation from "sin, sickness, and death" is to be secured, not by any miraculous intervention from another world, but by so mastering the principles of reality that results may be secured by a well-ordered process. The "natural" world is to be theologically interpreted. When this theological interpretation has been carried through, the individual thus equipped will have a "scientific" method of securing salvation. The attitude required for religious experience is simply the willingness to learn the truth. This will disclose God as the ever-present power bringing goodness and purity to all who learn his true nature.

The religious possibilities of immanentist philosophy are strikingly disclosed in the wide appeal which Christian Science has had. Thousands of people who had had only a vague and formal conception of God, as they had learned about him in the older theology, have discovered in Christian Science that God is immediately accessible, that he is in fact more real than the material world which absorbs our primary attention. The theological interpretation of the *one* world in which we live shows that when we think truly, we find that the "world" has ceased to be a barrier between us and God. It vanishes before the idealistic, theological interpretation which affirms the sole creative activity of God.

Another popular interpretation of the conception of divine immanence is found in "New Thought." One of

the most widely read books expounding this optimistic religion is Ralph Waldo Trine's *In Tune with the Infinite.* The following quotations from this book will indicate the extraordinary religious appeal of a thorough-going philosophy of immanence:

> God, then, is the Infinite Spirit which fills all the universe with Himself alone, so that all is from Him and in Him, and there is nothing that is outside. Indeed and in truth, then, in Him we live and move and have our being. He is the life of our life, our very life itself. We have received, we are continually receiving our life from Him. We are partakers of the life of God; and though we differ from Him in that we are individualized spirits while He is the Infinite Spirit including us as well as all else beside, yet *in essence the life of God and the life of man are identically the same, and so are one.* They differ not in essence, in quality; they differ in degree.
>
> We can keep closed to this divine inflow, to these higher forces and powers . . . . and thus hinder or even prevent their manifesting through us. . . . . On the other hand, we can come into so vital a realization of the oneness of our real selves with this Infinite Life, and can open ourselves so fully to the coming of this divine inflow . . . . that we can in deed and in truth become what we may well term God-men.[1]

New Thought has carried idealistic philosophy to its extreme limits. The natural world is entirely divine. In fact, we may practically ignore everything except the divine activity working through it all. Men who long for enrichment of life have simply to "open themselves to the divine inflow," and they will experience "fulness of peace, power, and plenty."

So long as general philosophical conceptions of the universe are permitted, this thoroughly theological interpretation seems very logical. Moreover, it has the ad-

[1] Pp. 12 and 17.

vantage of steering clear of those mooted questions concerning "authority" which are so difficult to answer today. It seems to bring the individual face to face with God in simple and direct fashion. Religion appears to be just a natural quest for God; and God is ready to answer that quest directly. Troublesome doctrinal speculations, which perplex and confuse those who are expected to "accept" a complicated system, are here ignored. This direct attitude of inquiry is more closely in accord with the scientific spirit of our day than is a theology resting upon "authority."

But upon serious examination, certain misgivings appear. Of great importance is the fact that this idealistically interpreted universe does not seem to have much in common with the conclusions of modern science. It is too sentimental, too largely derived from an unproved assumption concerning the character of the God who is asserted to be the principle and the source of all that is. It passes altogether too lightly over the "problem of evil" which so many of us must face. It requires us to affirm a theoretically optimistic conception of the ultimate control of the universe, even when the facts seem to be against it. Consequently, those whom Professor James called the "tough-minded" have revolted against the too easy religious solution afforded by philosophical idealism. Especially since the great war compelled us to face evil on a gigantic scale is there hesitancy about approving so benevolent a theory of the way in which the world is evolving.

But the conception of religion as something entirely natural, and as having its proper field of development in this world, has increasingly come to be generally accepted.

It underlies most of the very significant development of religious education during the past quarter of a century. It means that theologians are fast ceasing to concern themselves with the problem of discovering an authentic channel by which a supernatural revelation might come to men. They are rather attempting to understand what religion is, and they generally think of religion as an attempt on man's part to enter into right relations with those forces which will enable him to realize the richest life in this world here and now.

This means that the most important religious question of the present day is the definition of God. The younger generation today has in general no sense of a supernatural world. When modern astronomers stretch the imagination until the universe is unthinkably infinite in space, and its development extends over incalculable time, the "natural" world suddenly becomes vast enough to challenge all our powers of thought. Man is seen to be the product (or more strictly speaking, one of the products) of this vast cosmic process. Religion means finding right adjustment to this process. God, therefore, must be thought of as a reality in the process to which right adjustment may be made. But since we know something about the universe as a result of scientific inquiry, any conception of God must square itself with what scientists say concerning the nature and the behavior of the natural world. H. G. Wells, a few years ago frankly stated his conviction that this ultimate power is a "veiled being"; and he advocated a religion which should discover the companionship of a finite God. The rapidly growing interest in mysticism is another indication of the feeling that the difficulties in the way of a satisfactory definition

of God are so great that our present contact with God must be through general emotional experiences rather than through a definite theology. New phrases are being created in order to bring out the characteristics of the God discovered through religious interpretation of *this* world. Professor E. W. Lyman uses the phrase "eternal creative good-will."[1] Professor James B. Pratt suggests the term "determiner of destiny."[2] A recent writer has frankly stated that we are not yet ready to give a satisfactory definition of God for the reason that we have not as yet developed a scientific method of discovering just what we mean religiously. He declares:

> God is precisely that object, whatsoever its nature may be, which will yield maximum security and abundance to all human living, when right adjustment is made. With this definition of the term it cannot be doubted that God exists. The exact nature of God is still problematical and may be for many years to come.[3]

It would seem that we are on the threshhold of an extremely interesting development in theological thinking. The time has come when an increasing number of religious thinkers are ceasing to attempt to find some "revelation" from which may be derived knowledge inaccessible to natural human experience. They are frankly recognizing that all that we can know, inadequate though it may be, must come through human inquiry; and they are beginning to insist that this inquiry shall be an investigation of the resources and the meaning of this "natural" world. It is quite possible that this new type

[1] *The Experience of God in Modern Life.*

[2] *The Religious Consciousness.*

[3] Henry Nelson Wieman, *Religious Experience and Scientific Method*, p. 381.

of inquiry, made as it is in relation to a conception of the universe due to modern science rather than to idealistic philosophy, will come to a conception of God differing in some particulars from the traditional conception. Theology has changed its conception of the Bible and its conception of Jesus. The next important realm of critical inquiry seems to be the doctrine of God.

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IX

THE MODERN QUEST FOR GOD

The increasing use of the empirical method in examining the nature of religion has led to certain unforeseen results. The validity of religious doctrines and rites was formerly referred to divine establishment. With a more historically accurate understanding of the development of religion, these older sanctions have been replaced by considerations drawn from human experience. Religion has come to stand on its own feet and to claim recognition because of its intrinsic values. It has not always been recognized that when God is no longer appealed to as the guarantor of religion his place in a religious system is very different from that occupied by him in a religion which refers every item to a divine origin. Religion, it seems, would continue, even if God should cease to play any part in religious thinking. We are thus brought face to face with the question whether, if we interpret religion in experiential rather than theological terms, such a religion needs inevitably to affirm the existence of God. Is theism essential to religion?

It is not an easy matter to determine just what is "essential" to religion. We can point to doctrines which have ultimately been abandoned, although these were once declared to be indispensable. The "essentials" of any religion usually turn out to be those tenets and practices which the religious group requires as a condition of membership. The ultimate test, however, must be found

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in the actual valuation of the alleged "essentials" in the experience of living persons. If any of these cease to be personally precious, they become mere formalities; and sooner or later in the interests of sincerity a dissenting group will redefine religion so as to omit the items which have no vital meaning. For a person who does not *feel* the reality of God, the doctrine of God is not a religious essential.

Instead, then, of starting with an a priori definition of religion and seeking to ascertain whether theism is a necessary factor in that definition, we shall get more directly at the root of the problem if we ask why the present questioning of the theistic hypothesis has arisen.

I

"Theism is the doctrine that nature has a Creator and Preserver, the nations a Governor, men a Heavenly Father and Judge." Thus Robert Flint defined the term. This definition expressly mentions the three realms in which theistic philosophy has been specifically applied. There is, in the first place, a theological explanation of the physical universe; in the second place, a theological theory of political authority; and in the third place a theological interpretation of religious and moral experience. This threefold reference to God still obtains in Roman Catholic theology. "Natural law" is the expression of the divine will. Political authority is derived from God. Personal religion is interpreted against the background of the certainty of the divine judgment, and consists in accepting a divinely provided way of salvation.

This theological interpretation of the three realms of nature, society, and personal life can be readily elaborated

into a consistent and intellectually satisfactory philosophy. All problems find their solution in the appeal to the perfect rational and moral character of God. Things which seem to us to be irrational or lacking in moral goodness can be rationalized and moralized by translating them into universal principles derived from the perfect wisdom and love of God. Theism is absolutely essential to this type of religion. The problems of life are "solved" only as the prior affirmation of divine causality and control is maintained. The Roman Catholic sees clearly that the theological system stands or falls as a whole. He traces a direct line of inevitable philosophical disintegration, starting with the denial of the authority of the church by Luther, followed by denial of the authority of the Bible, leading then to the denial of the divine foundations of political organization, and issuing ultimately in atheism and anarchism. The Catholic remedy for all evils is to return to the scholastic philosophy, which is essentially theological in character. Religion, as the Catholic conceives it, simply cannot exist without an all-inclusive doctrine of God. It will help to understand the weakening hold of theism today, if we look briefly at the way in which modern thought has broken away from the traditional threefold theological control.

1. First in time came the dissolution of the theological theory of politics. That theory was expressed in the doctrine of the divine right of kings. It is still dominant in the Roman Catholic theory of politics, which holds that all authority is from God. But in the experience of modern nations it was found that the doctrine of the divine right of the ruler could be easily invoked to sustain royal tyranny. The democratic movement which has inspired

modern political development has been based upon the primary tenet of the rights of *man*. The attainment of these rights has frequently been secured only by a revolution against established political authority; and the resisting political régime usually fortified itself by the theological doctrine of divine right. The consequence of the struggle for democratic rights was the secularizing of politics. The example of the United States in demanding a complete separation of church and state has been followed in other lands and seems to be a necessary means of preserving human rights from the encroachments of ecclesiastical control. It should be added that the Great War extinguished in popular thought the last vestiges of belief in the divine guidance of nations.

Following this actual secularization of government, modern treatises on political science interpret the history and the organization of states in terms of an evolution of human experimentation. The validity of any given form of political organization is never tested by theological principles. Theism has vanished from political philosophy.

In terms of practical experience, the secularization of government means that citizenship is complete without any distinctively religious requirements. We look back in curious wonder at the time when citizenship was conditioned on church membership. Today we glory in the fact that an atheist has just as full political rights as a theist. If, now, in our political practice it makes no essential difference whether one is a theist or not, if one can be a good citizen without believing in God, theism comes to be a matter of taste rather than a fundamental doctrine.

2. The second of the three realms to be secularized was the realm of nature. The outstanding characteristic

of modern scholarship is the prevalence of the scientific method. Carefully controlled investigations are yielding an astonishing amount of information concerning the universe and are giving rise to more or less exact formulations. But the success of scientific exploration seems to depend on concentrated specialization in the field of inquiry. In the place of such universal generalizations as the older "laws of nature," we find the scientists patiently attempting to disentangle the complex knot of factors which go to make up any particular occurrence. The consequence is the development of a kind of interpretation which flourishes best without the restraining influence of any overhead philosophy. Each science must be free to carry on such experiments as have been found to be promising. A theological supervision of science is felt to be intolerable.

More and more, as empirical science advances, do philosophical generalizations seem to be vague and comparatively meaningless. A far greater reality-sense attaches to the limited and specialized conclusions in a narrowly defined field of investigation than to "speculations" concerning reality in general. It is difficult for the specialized scientific mind to see the need of any such unifying causal principle as was implied by the conception of a theologically derived "natural law." The behavior of forces is frequently "irrational," in the sense that it does not conform to any neat "laws" which a rational mind might be expected to impose. To presuppose any such closed system as is affirmed by theism seems to the scientist to be a pure exercise of the imagination. He cannot discover that the conception of God is of the slightest use in furthering his investigations.

The utterances of scientists who are eager to promote harmonious relations between religion and science are instructive on this point. Typically these scientists are careful to define the scope of religion so that it will not in any way interfere with the complete freedom of their science. Science, they declare, is concerned solely with the discovery of facts and their interrelationships. Religion, they insist, has to do with the ideals and the spiritual life of man. In many cases a somewhat sharp division is drawn between these two realms. But it is to be noted that scientists generally speak of *religion*, rather than of God. Their belief in God, in so far as it persists at all, is a rather vague emotional inheritance. The support of theism which comes from the scientists is a somewhat doubtful asset. It is often stated in so naïve and vulnerable a fashion as to lead one to wonder just what the effect will be on critical minds.

In the realm of practice, also, the contributions of modern science tend to lead men away from an actual use of the theistic hypothesis. The amelioration of the conditions of human life is sought by the use of definite remedies for specific evils. There is no single general formula which may be used for all problems. Epidemics are now averted by controlling sources of infection rather than by prayer. Material prosperity is seen to depend on economic factors rather than on generalized moral attitudes. Wrongdoing is being analyzed by the elaboration of case studies, and the causes are located in definite physiological or psychical or social conditions rather than in a general state of sinfulness. Christianity itself is more and more employing specific and individualized remedies for wrong-doing and trouble, rather than any

single "plan of salvation." In the face of this practical pluralism, the appeal to God occupies a decreasing place in modern religion. The widespread decline of the practice of prayer is partly due to the fact that men find their actual salvation by recourse to various non-theological remedies rather than by appeal to a single "first cause."

Thus in the interpretation of cosmic forces, as well as in the interpretation of political authority, the practical thinking of our age is non-theological. There is no immediate urge which leads men to crave a theistic philosophy.

3. The demand for theism, then, comes to be restricted to personal religious experience. Men can be good citizens without appealing to God. They can be good scientists without affirming theism. Can they be religious without a belief in God?

The type of religious experience which we have inherited was based on the prior acceptance of theism. It was taken for granted that God had created the world for man, that he had given a revelation of his will in the Bible, and that he had established a definite "plan of salvation" through which men might be rescued. The rituals and hymns and prayers of the Christian church keep alive in imagination this theistic background of religious experience. It is unquestionably true that with rare exceptions Christians feel that a belief in God and a genuine religious experience are indissolubly bound up together.

But the same methods of scientific interpretation which eliminated theism from both natural science and social science are making inroads into the realm of personal religion. The psychology of religion has undertaken to examine the content and function of theological ideas,

with a view to a more exact definition of religion. But this study discovers that rationalization is a secondary rather than a primary activity of human life. The fundamental realities in our experience are not ideas, but the primitive, instinctive reactions of the human organism to the stimulus of environment. Thus human life is "originally" related to an unrationalized environment rather than to a world of ideas. The new psychology thus cuts the ground from under the older idealistic philosophy, which pictured a universe already existing in terms of rationalized entities and processes. Ideas and theories grow up as a means of consistent and purposeful adjustment to environment.

The conception of God, from this point of view, appears as a result of religious experience. In other words, religion exists first; theological ideas are secondary. The study of history discloses the fact that religions have existed without theism. Animism, fetichism, polytheism, fatalism, as well as theism, exist as interpreters of religion. Does religion actually need any one of these?

Responding to this psychological and historical analysis of religion, discussions concerning the nature of God in recent years have taken on a distinctively pragmatic aspect. Our right to believe in the existence of God is as a rule frankly based on the assertion that such a belief is demanded by human experience in its fundamental aspects. The line of argument made familiar a generation ago by John Fiske, has recently been stated by Dr. William L. Davidson, as follows:

> My position, then, is that *God is a necessity of human nature;* which means, not only that in Him this natural spiritual want finds satisfaction (which is something), but further, that it never could

have arisen apart from Him as objectively existent. In other words, the existence of the Object as real is implied in the actual existence of the want. Just as in the case of hunger, on the lower or animal side of our nature, hunger as a want obviously could not originate save in a living organism whose very existence depends on its being nourished by food and, therefore, presupposes the real existence of food, so on the higher or spiritual side of our being, the actual fact of our need of God, laid deep in the human constitution, implies that God *is*, as both originating and as satisfying it.[1]

This is the line of argument generally taken by present-day theologians. It represents an attitude quite in keeping with the scientific spirit of our day. It makes the affirmation and the exposition of the conception of God as reasonable an undertaking as the affirmation and interpretation of any scientific hypothesis. But if it is to be anything more than a clever *tour de force* by means of which dawning doubts may be allayed, it requires a closer analysis. And it is this closer analysis which is creating the difficulties in the way of a confident affirmation of the theistic hypothesis.

"God is a necessity of human nature." So runs the argument. But just what is human nature? It turns out to be a curiously complex affair. While each individual is unquestionably related to cosmic forces in such a fashion that his life involves a vital co-ordination of organism and environment and while this co-ordination gives rise to definite theories as to the nature of the environment, it is a well-known fact that theories change. We need only refer to the development of the science of physics in our own day to remind us that what at one time is regarded as an ontological ultimate may be disintegrated with the further progress of investigation and experiment. If the

[1] T. & T. Clark, *Recent Theistic Discussions* (1921), p. 29.

functions formerly attributed to God should be so analyzed as to lead us to interpret religion in terms of more readily identifiable stimuli, how much "need" would continue to be felt for God? For many thoughtful persons some such transfer is actually taking place to a considerable extent. The defense of theism which Dr. Davidson proposes seems conclusive only to one who still thinks of the world in terms of an idealistic philosophy which posits God as the dynamic source of all reality.

If we analyze this alleged need of God in the case of religions other than our own, we come upon a disconcerting discovery. Shamash was a very real figure in the religious life of the ancient Babylonians. Doubtless the theologians of that day regarded his existence as absolutely certain. Of the reality of Shamash *in Babylonian religious belief* there can be no question. But what about the ontological reality of Shamash? In the course of time those religious needs which had been satisfied by Shamash came to be satisfied by more convincing conceptions. We frankly say that Shamash was a symbol of religious hopes rather than an actual deity. It is significant that historical scholars, in interpreting the religion of the Old Testament, usually employ the term "Yahweh" rather than the term "God." This means the recognition that Yahweh belongs to a state of religious thinking which we have outgrown. What would a modern theologian say concerning the ontological reality of Yahweh?

Such a study of the history of religions suggests that religion has a way of outgrowing its theologies. Christianity has outgrown many doctrines in the course of the centuries. Is it inconceivable that it should outgrow the traditional doctrine of God? Modern Christian faith *has*

outgrown Calvin's conception of a predestinating God. Just what do we mean by "God" anyway?

The prevalent ideal of theological toleration is symptomatic of the changed emphasis in religion. Where the conception of God is most "essential" we have religion in the name of God insisting on conformity to the divinely prescribed doctrines and rituals. It is only when doctrines are seen to be human creations that toleration becomes possible. Modernist Christianity glories in its attitude of toleration. Theology is frankly declared to be a matter of individual conscience. The "essentials" of Christianity are found in certain attitudes and ideals of life rather than in theological doctrines. A certain clergyman in a church which was carrying on an important enterprise of humanitarian welfare work made an appeal in his sermon for a helper in a day nursery. A young woman presented herself, wistfully remarking that much as she would like to enlist for the work she knew that she would not be accepted. "Why not?" asked the clergyman. "Because I am an atheist," was the reply. "Why should your theology stand in the way of our fellowship in a Christian enterprise?" said the clergyman. Was theism essential to that young woman's religion? How generally would modern Christians approve the attitude of the clergyman?

The present-day questioning of theism is due to the fact that we are so largely thinking of religion in terms of itself rather than in terms of theology. When to our secularized politics and our secularized conception of the universe we add the present religious toleration of theological differences, it is no wonder that men are beginning to ask whether the doctrine of God is not too difficult and too vague to furnish the best basis for religion.

II

Before turning to a consideration of the possibility of so revising the theistic conception as to meet the difficulties which confront thoughtful men, it will be well to look briefly at proposals to organize religious values without resort to theism.

Among the most influential leaders of philosophical and social thinking in this country are certain men who distrust any appeal to superhuman forces on the ground that such an appeal weakens and delays the social reconstruction so sorely needed in our day. These men consider a theistic philosophy as a means of escape from the tasks of this world by indulging in pleasant visions of a divine world. Professor M. C. Otto has given persuasive utterance to an antitheistic philosophy of life in a stimulating book, *Things and Ideals*. He quotes from a defense of religion by "one of the foremost scientists of our time," who rhetorically declares that if the theistic conception of meaning and purpose in the world be all a dream, this scientist asks to be permitted to "dream on forever." Such a statement seems to Professor Otto to indicate a cowardly attitude. Does theism lead one to prefer a consoling dream to a courageous facing of the facts when these facts are unpleasant? Professor Otto and others who, like him, are profoundly concerned to enlist idealism in the use of scientific control so as to further human welfare, feel that theism tempts generous-minded people to spend their time and energy in trying to prove that *God* will somehow bring things out right. This kind of faith seems to them positively immoral in that it furnishes an excuse for evading the hard but imperative duty of devoting human intelligence to an analysis of the problems of social

reconstruction. Says Professor Otto: "It has always been a step toward a more worthy social economy, toward a better general chance at a more fortunate existence, when men and women have refused to be put off with the promise of a supernatural recompense for actual earthly defeat; when they have dared to entrust their destiny to the social devices their combined aspiration and intelligence might invent."

There is a measure of truth in this criticism. Who of us has not felt hot indignation at faith-healing which disparages medical science, at evangelism which induces hysteria or sentimentalism, at pious resignation which refuses to become indignant at remediable social conditions? It is a wholesome thing for defenders of theism to be compelled to ask themselves whether they are primarily interested in the maintenance of a religion of escape from the ills of this world. Are theists more concerned with a religion of consolation or with a religion of moral earnestness?

This antitheistic philosophy seems to have an intellectual advantage in that it does not attempt to blink ugly facts. It argues frankly on the basis of what science seems to tell us concerning the universe, viz., that the cosmic process appears to be largely indifferent to human ideals. If we simply accept this as a fact, we are done at one stroke with the "problem of evil" which has never been satisfactorily solved so long as it is assumed that the universe must be made to appear as the expression of a perfectly good purpose. The supreme task of humanity now comes to be, not the attempt to prove the existence of a good God who will somehow overcome evil, but rather the courageous attempt to unite all men in the co-

operative enterprise of wresting from nature all the aid possible in furthering human welfare so long as there are humans on the planet. Such a program escapes the metaphysics of apologetic theology. In its eagerness to enlist men devotedly in the crusade for a humanly better world, it becomes extremely impatient with the theologians who are distracting fine emotions by the lure of imaginary heavenly aid.

Nevertheless, those who interpret theism as a sentimental refuge from the ills of life are quite wrong if they think that this is the typical Christian interpretation. Calvinism is perhaps the most thoroughgoing form of Christian theism; but no one will accuse Calvinism of a lack of ethical and social energy. Modern theistic Christianity is conspicuously emphasizing the "social gospel" in terms of devotion to God's will. It is, I believe, an entirely false assumption that theism usually induces a lessened interest in the human betterment of this world.

At the same time, those who advocate theism must be on their guard against the defect which Professor Otto feels to be inherent, namely, the comfortable assumption that "God's in his heaven; all's right with the world." In the face of the undeniable fact of the relentless and inviolable order of nature, a theism which is too eager to identify the loving God of Christian faith with the trend of the cosmic process may substitute sentimentalism for social engineering.

It may be seriously questioned, however, whether there is any real need of accepting quite so depressing a view of the cosmic order. Granted that supernaturalistic theism is too vulnerable, it is at least legitimate to inquire whether some modification of that theory may not suit

the facts, when *all* the facts are taken into consideration. Humanity has been produced by the cosmos. The aspirations and activities of mankind are expressions of cosmic force, expressed through the functioning of an organism which nature has produced. Mankind can accomplish nothing save as he uses the forces of nature in accordance with limitations which nature herself imposes. Protest as we may against what we call the heartlessness of nature, we cannot escape from nature. Is it not a true instinct which leads us to believe that we may in some fashion share the meaning of the cosmic process in our conscious experience as truly as we are compelled to live physically in terms of nature's established process? Is it quite satisfactory to affirm on the one hand the inescapable physical dependence of man on natural forces, but on the other hand to bid man in the evolution of his ethical and social life defy the very nature on which he is dependent?

It is my conviction that such a dualism between the cosmos and the life of man can scarcely be successfully maintained. The majority of persons will continue to feel that man belongs to the cosmic order in his spiritual as well as in his physical existence. They will then either attempt to interpret the cosmic order in such a way as to feel that their moral enterprises are in some sense supported by that order, or else they will conclude that since the cosmos is indifferent to spiritual values, they, as products of the cosmos, may also be indifferent. I seriously question whether a merely naturalistic idealism, declared to be something qualitatively different from the cosmic process, will actually engender the enthusiasm which these humanists expect. In the long run mankind will decide to have the universe on his side rather than to

defy it. If it is clear that the cosmic process cares nothing for human ideals, man will adjust himself to the inevitable. And the inevitable, on this hypothesis, is a non-human heartless evolution. I should be much more afraid that such an antitheistic position would lead to moral indifference than I should be that theism would weaken moral idealism.

An alluring proposal to disentangle religion from metaphysical theology without abandoning historical Christianity has been made by Professor E. S. Ames. He, like most Christian leaders today, is supremely concerned to make religion a vital power in the moral and social reconstruction of human life. He would correlate religious devotion with the actual scientific and social forces dominant in our life. But he realizes that our Christian inheritance is an indispensable carrier of religious idealism. He proposes therefore to reinterpret the familiar religious terms so as to make them vehicles for a social gospel.

He suggests that while God is a reality *in experience*, he is a humanistic rather than a superhuman reality. Professor Ames holds that the history of religions shows that the god of any people is the pictorial representation of the group spirit. What is socially regarded as supremely desirable is given emotional power by picturing it as the purpose of a god who is solicitous for the welfare of the group. The god idea of Israel was evidently a reflection of the prevailing national hopes. In Christianity, the vanishing of monarchs as the guardians of group security has been accompanied by the weakening or the disappearance of the monarchical conception of God. In a modern democracy our salvation depends on our own co-operative effort. There is no transcendent king who can save us. In

modern democratic religion, our salvation must be worked out by social co-operation. The theology (if the word may be retained in the sense of an interpretation of religion) of Christianity today must express this supreme ideal of social co-operation. "God," therefore, stands for the spirit of the group which aspires to bring in the "Kingdom of God." He is as real as Alma Mater; but his reality is to be found in the realm of human society rather than in the realm of cosmic processes.

The obvious advantage of this reinterpretation of the conception of God is that it enables Christian groups to continue to use familiar words and religious rituals which are fraught with great emotional power, while at the same time directing the emotion thus engendered toward the ethical and social ends so important in modern life. But in identifying God with purely humanistic ends the older theism is, of course, repudiated.

It is, perhaps, impossible to expect logical consistency during religious adjustment. There have been too many instances of the retention of words while radically altering the meaning of those words, for us to declare that the word "God" cannot be translated into exclusively humanistic meanings. But such a translation at present involves serious ambiguities. The frank position of Professor Otto is at least intelligible. Professor Ames takes a term which has always been used to indicate some kind of cosmic or superhuman support of man's hopes and uses it to give emotional drive to a social program which confessedly depends entirely on human enterprise. The plain fact is that such a "God" has no jurisdiction over nature. He acts only in the aspirations and undertakings of the human group. Is religion then to ignore nature? Pro-

fessor Ames attempts to meet this question by calling attention to the fact that we know nature only in terms of a humanly devised "world of discourse"; and he intimates that "the conception of God as the Spirit of the Group is not inconsistent with the thought of him also as the God of nature when nature is thought of as socially conditioned." This latter statement, however, gives small comfort to those who feel that religion is not complete unless it enables man to feel at home in the universe which produced him. A "socially conditioned" nature is a conception fitted to do duty in epistemology rather than in practical religion. It is difficult to see just what the function of God would be here, unless we were to identify God with the spirit of devotion to science which binds together those who are interpreting nature.

III

Theism is an interpretation of the universe in terms of a philosophy which makes it possible for man to believe in a cosmic support of his ideals and values. This cosmic interest is an inescapable aspect of religion. Important as is the emphasis on human achievement, ultimately we are thrown back on the non-human forces of nature. We long to come to terms with that vast mysterious realm into which we must pass at death even if we have been partially protected from its ruthless hand by human devices during our life. The deepest springs of religious experience are in man's sense of dependence on the non-human cosmos. Theism attempts to make this experienced dependence a source of joy and confidence, and thus to set men free from cramping fear to engage in the nobler tasks of human enterprise. The importance and the value

of this undertaking can scarcely be too highly commended.

But philosophical theism is unconvincing to many people because of its very completeness. Has it not usually been more eager to give a theoretically complete definition of God than to face frankly all the facts? Is it not too essentially a priori to serve as the means of furthering the modern religious quest? Does it not seek to prove a thesis rather than to interpret the facts? Strictly speaking, theism assumes that all the varied processes in the evolution of the universe can be gathered up into a single divine purpose. Can this conception be maintained today in any except an apologetic fashion? Does theistic philosophy really seem convincing?

We might as well frankly face the fact that "tough-minded" persons have never been able to acquiesce in the doctrine of theistic control. It is comparatively easy to argue from the orderliness of the processes of nature, and from the fact that this order is intelligible, to the doctrine of an intelligent principle running through all nature. We may remark, however, in passing, that what we know of the evolutionary process seems to suggest an endless series of experiments rather than a clearly defined rational goal. Still, it is not here that the greatest difficulty is felt. It is the age-old problem of evil which creates doubts. If we take the facts as we find them, we are compelled to recognize that the cosmic process seems to be largely indifferent to human values. A theism which contents itself merely with the notion of an intelligible universe can make out a fairly good case. A theism which seeks to establish such a cosmic solicitude for human welfare as has been attributed to the Christian God has an extreme-

ly difficult task. It is this modern recognition of the apparently heartless character of the cosmos that has led to the conception of a "finite God," who preserves the quality of love by declining to assume responsibility for the cosmos as a whole. The difficulties in the way of exactly identifying this finite God are obvious.

Nevertheless, most of the Christian interpretations of God today really approximate this conception of finiteness. We no longer expect God to alter in any way the inexorable course of nature. We no longer connect earthquakes with God. The almost complete absence of attempts at a theological explanation of the great earthquake in Japan is a phenomenon worthy of serious consideration. The activity of God according to modern representations is restricted almost exclusively to his ability to help men meet whatever fate they must meet with spiritual triumph. God's activity is found in his power to create in man generous and high-minded courage. The cosmic order is really more or less of an enigma to the modern theologian. Even when he bravely attempts to continue the theistic arguments of the past, sooner or later we find in his confessions of ignorance something like the "veiled being" of H. G. Wells.

It seems probable that theologians in the near future will adopt a more inductive approach to the problem of defining the nature of the cosmic object of religious worship. They will state the problems of religious thinking in terms of human adjustment to environment rather than in terms of a doctrine of theistic control. The character of God will be found in the experienced reciprocity between man and his environment rather than in the realm of metaphysical causation. The modern trend in

theology is decidedly in the direction of exploring mysticism rather than in a dependence on philosophy.

We think of life as an adjustment between organism and environment. Religion is an aspect of this life-process. The problem to be faced is as to the kind of adjustment which is possible. Shall it be conceived as making the best terms obtainable from an indifferent or hostile cosmos? Or is it possible to make an adjustment of such a kind that in it there is an experience of spiritual oneness with the cosmic mystery—an experience which gives to life unspeakable fulness and meaning? If the latter kind of adjustment is possible, there has been a religious discovery of God. Such a discovery is possible and supremely desirable. While we cannot refuse to recognize the right of a less mystical adjustment to claim the name of religion; while we must recognize genuine Christianity—of a kind—in the humanistic zeal of some antitheistic writers; nevertheless there is a spiritual profundity in the mystical interpretation which is relatively lacking in idealisms which attempt to get along without God.

In religion man brings his highest ideals and his most precious values into the presence of that vast cosmic mystery which has produced him and which holds him in its power. He seeks to obtain from this cosmic power some kind of blessing on these values and ideals. Thus far interpreters of religion would probably agree. They would also probably agree that as a result of this relating of his ideals and values to the cosmic mystery, man experiences a sense of satisfaction. To what is this sense of satisfaction due? Is it purely a psychological process due to the projection of one's hopes and desires in an imaginative personalization? Or is there a real reciprocity be-

tween the worshiping individual and his cosmic environment?

The testimony of religious souls points to a real reciprocity. It is, of course, true that epistemological analysis will destroy a naïvely realistic conception of the other side of this reciprocal experience. But epistemology has done this for the physical world so often that we are ceasing to be disturbed by the inevitable "egocentric" factor in any interpretation. We are quite willing to recognize that our conceptions of physical reality are symbolic rather than descriptive. Nevertheless, so long as we can continue to use them in our actual dealings with the world, we have no practical doubt as to the objective existence of that world. If any particular conception comes to be involved in too great difficulties, we simply modify it, or even abandon it for another. Is not the case somewhat similar in the realm of religion? If the theistic hypothesis becomes too difficult to maintain, may we not abandon it for some more suitable conception without thereby abandoning our belief in *some* kind of cosmic reality capable of stimulating in us the experiences which we call religious?

The theistic hypothesis suffers from being too definite to suit our rapidly enlarging knowledge of the nature of the cosmos. It is too thoroughly rationalized. One of the common experiences of today is the sense of unutterable wonder as the incalculable spaces disclosed by astronomy and the unimaginable stretches of time suggested by the doctrine of evolution and the almost incredible marvels of atomic structure and action are apprehended. What we know suggests powerfully the mysteries which we do not and perhaps cannot know. A theistic theology seems to many a person to belittle the religious relationship by

fitting in too neatly into the categories of human logic. Poetry, symbolism, wordless adoration, seem more truly to interpret our relationship to the cosmic order than does a system depicting precise theological control. Do we really want to believe in a God who is too completely rationalized?

Moreover, when we attempt to construct some theory of the cosmos which shall do justice to all that we know, we are compelled to acknowledge that our humanity seems like a rather minor incident in the total cosmic process. As Professor Everett has suggested, we seem forced by the facts to think of the universe as an empire comprising many kingdoms, rather than as a single kingdom the purpose of which is to make man the goal of the evolutionary process. When we have said all that we can concerning the capacity of man to master the conditions of living, we are compelled to recognize that there are some processes inexorably going on which seem either indifferent or hostile to human welfare, and which man is apparently powerless to affect. The universe is "an empire with many kingdoms."

And yet humanity finds its values and ideals so precious that it dares to bring these in religious aspiration into relationship with the great cosmic mystery, believing that through such relationship cosmic support may be obtained. The belief in God means that there may be found, not merely within the circle of human society but also in the non-human environment on which we are dependent, a *quality* of the cosmic process akin to the quality of our own spiritual life. Through communion with this qualitative aspect of the cosmic process human life attains an experience of dignity, and a reinforcement of

spiritual power. The quality of this reinforcement can be adequately expressed only by the conception of a Divine Presence in the cosmic order.

Theism undertook to give rational form to precisely this religious experience in an age when problems were solved by philosophy rather than by scientific experiment. As between theism and antitheism, the theist is doubtless nearer right. But it is questionable whether theism of the usual type will continue to be a convincing way of stating a religious view of the world, when once the world is apprehended in terms of our modern science. Religion for men who think in this fashion will consist in a great mystic experiment rather than in the acceptance of a theological system. The religious man will, under modern conditions, have many a doubt concerning the objective reality of what the theologians call God. He may, for a time, seek to find satisfaction in purely humanistic aspiration. But the relation of humanity to the vast and awful forces and processes disclosed by modern science is an insistent and haunting problem. The mind which has discovered the marvels of the incalculably vast and complicated universe will not be content merely to describe what it finds. It will demand some kind of spiritual fellowship with the non-human as well as with the human. Just what conception of God will ultimately emerge from the great experiment we cannot yet tell. But it will express the experience of kinship between man and that quality in environment which supports and enriches humanity in its spiritual quest. God will be very real to the religious man, but his reality will be interpreted in terms of social reciprocity with an as yet inadequately defined cosmic support of human values, rather than in

terms of theistic creatorship and control. The experience of God will take the form of comradeship with that aspect of our non-human environment which is found to reinforce and to enrich our life. Anthropomorphic symbols will be frankly used to promote that experience, but they will not be pressed into exact theological descriptions. Those expressions of divine solicitude for man which Christianity has incorporated into its doctrine of God will probably continue to characterize religious thought. But a too definite theistic philosophy will suffer from the disadvantage of encountering adverse criticism at the hands of scientists and psychologists. An apologetic for theism is likely to betray more or less clearly the fact that the doctrine stands related to too finished and static a conception of reality to seem really convincing to men who think in terms of evolutionary science. A more promising method of approach seems to be the frank recognition of the fact that our religious relationship to what we worship in our cosmic environment must be empirically studied, and our conception of God must be formulated in tentative terms which grow out of that experience, rather than in terms of an a priori philosophy assuming to be final. Men may believe in God without being able to define God.

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X

THE CONTROVERSY OVER EVOLUTION

One of the conspicuous features of recent religious history in this country has been the controversy over the theory of evolution. Twenty years ago it seemed that religious thinking had largely adjusted itself to scientific conclusions on this subject. When Darwin's great work appeared in 1859, theologians were naturally greatly disturbed. Dr. Hodge, the influential Princeton theologian, declared in the eighties of the last century that Darwinism logically leads to atheism. But during the last decade of the century, men like Henry Drummond had indicated a positive religious use that could be made of biological findings. Lyman Abbott in 1898 published a most readable book entitled *The Theology of an Evolutionist*, in which he described evolution as God's method of doing things. By the year 1910 it had come to be taken for granted by most religious leaders that the evolutionary hypothesis could be positively used in the interpretation of religion.

It is true that for the most part theological interpretations of the theory were very general. They were concerned mainly with a somewhat vague philosophical view which could be turned in an optimistic direction. It was generally held by religious interpreters that evolution represented a process by which constantly "higher" forms of life were being developed, until the climax was reached in man. It was thus possible to regard man as the

"crown of creation" and to continue to use without any radical alterations the familiar Christian picture of man as a special creation, in the sense that all else was subordinate to this last and highest product of evolution.

In recent years, however, this earlier optimism has been somewhat disturbed. The detailed investigations of scientists have tended to show that the fundamental life-processes are common to man and to other species. The differences between man and the "lower" forms of life do not appear to be as absolute as was assumed by the older theology. So far as biology is concerned, human beings are to be studied precisely as the animals are studied. Moreover, each species in the vast array of living beings seems to be struggling to maintain itself as if it were supremely important. It can no longer be said that the entire evolutionary process leads up to man.

> The evolution doctrine does not teach that man is the goal of all evolutionary process, but that man is merely the present end of one particular series of evolutionary changes. The goal of evolution in general is perfection of adaptation to the conditions of life as they happen to be at any particular time. Many a highly perfected creature has reached the goal of its evolutionary course only to perish because it was too highly perfected for a particular environment and could not withstand the hardships incident to radically changed world-conditions. Many evolutions therefore have been completed, while others are still awaiting the opportunity to speed up toward a new goal.[1]

If, now, the anthropocentric point of view which prevailed in the older theology is made doubtful by a broader view of the nature of the evolutionary process; if, so far as we can see, the cosmic process shows just as much

[1] H. H. Newman, *Readings in Evolution, Genetics, and Eugenics*, pp. 8 and 9.

(or as little) concern for non-human forms of life as for man, it becomes evident that the conception of man as the divinely appointed goal of evolution will be called in question by the findings of biological science.

By the second decade of the twentieth century, the younger teachers in universities and theological seminaries were men who had been trained largely in the use of scientific method. This training meant that all theories were regarded as tentative and capable of improvement. Such persons were not at all alarmed at the thought that doctrine might change as a result of closer investigation. Teachers belonging to the older generation were concerned to keep virtually unimpaired the old-time beliefs, and employed scientific conclusions with such adaptations as would cause as little disturbance as possible. Recently, however, an increasing number of teachers have begun to speak as frankly concerning religious doctrines as concerning the theories of science. They have been ready to abandon theological theories incompatible with scientific conclusions.

The complete acceptance of the evolutionary conception means that the account of the origin of man given in the first chapters of the Bible is no longer taken as literal fact. It is regarded as folk-lore. When we recall that the entire Christian doctrine of man's nature was in traditional theology built up on the basis of a declaration concerning Adam's original status and a minute analysis of the changes in his nature which took place as a result of the Fall, it is at once evident that to call in question the accuracy of the biblical narratives meant to undermine Christian theology of the older type. If we are not liable to divine wrath because of our inheritance from

Adam, just what becomes of the doctrine of sin? And if the doctrine of sin be taken lightly, what becomes of Christian morality?

The fundamentalists hold that a man's attitude toward the doctrine of evolution is a reliable indication of his general theological position. There is much truth in this. The evolutionary conception has come into existence, not because of a study of the Bible, but because of the employment of methods of scientific research. If a person accepts the evolutionary theory, he does so for scientific reasons. This means that he has learned to rely upon direct inquiry rather than on biblical exegesis for his conclusions. If, now, it be assumed that reliance on the Bible is indispensable to Christianity, the evolutionary theory is damaging to such reliance because the evolutionist has learned to derive his conclusions from another source.

During the past few years, the fundamentalists have singled out the evolutionary hypothesis as a special object of attack. They see clearly that the acceptance of this point of view inevitably leads to some kind of a "new" theology. In 1919 a committee appointed to report to the World Conference on the Fundamentals of the Faith brought in several resolutions, the last of which read as follows:

> And finally *resolved*, That in our colleges, especially, the teaching that man has descended or ascended from brute beast is not only unsupported by any unquestioned facts and therefore totally unscientific, but is a distinct denial of the Bible account of the creation of man, the beginning of sin, the plan of salvation, and the extension and triumph of the Christian religion in the world.

Mr. William Jennings Bryan was especially active in the crusade against the teaching of evolution, and during

the last years of his life devoted himself largely to the effort to secure legislation in various states forbidding the teaching of the doctrine of evolution in tax-supported schools.

We are not here concerned to follow the history of the anti-evolution campaign. Suffice it to say that it has brought to the front the question of the relationship of that doctrine to Christian faith. In this chapter we shall attempt to take a cross-section of current thinking on the subject and to indicate the typical attitudes of theologians toward the evolutionary hypothesis.

1. The position of the fundamentalists is clear and simple. The primary article of their faith is the conviction that whatever the Bible teaches is to be accepted as divine truth. The Bible teaches that man came into existence by direct creation at the hand of God. The evolutionary hypothesis teaches that man was derived naturally from a non-human ancestry. Anyone who accepts the Bible literally must reject the evolutionary theory.

Such an attitude has the merit of being perfectly definite. Moreover, it does not depend on argumentation. It is fundamentally an appeal to authority rather than an invitation to discuss the subject. What the fundamentalist does not see is that such an appeal would effectually prevent one from ever finding out whether he is right or not. If one is required beforehand to affirm only one of two different hypotheses, he can never learn which of the two is really true. He must go on affirming the prescribed doctrine, whether it turns out to be true or not. For a long time leaders in the church attempted to prevent the acceptance by Christians of the Copernican astronomy. The consequence was that *religion* was

prevented from testing the hypothesis. Its truth was established against the protests of theological leaders. The prestige of theology suffered immeasurably as a result of having backed a theory which ultimately had to be abandoned. It is now clearly seen that if the theologians who opposed the new science had been successful in their attempts, humanity would have been immeasurably poorer. Said Froude:

> If medicine had been regulated three hundred years ago by Act of Parliament; if there had been Thirty Nine Articles of Physic, and every licensed practitioner had been compelled under pains and penalties to compound his drugs by the prescriptions of Henry the Eighth's physician, Dr. Butts, it is easy to conjecture in what state of health the people of this country would at present be found.[1]

It is important to recognize the full implications of the theological denunciation of the hypothesis of evolution. It definitely arrays science and religion in opposition. It makes it necessary, in order to preserve the purity of the anti-evolutionist theology, to require of Christian teachers and leaders a declaration that they do not hold the evolutionary theory. Since, according to the testimony of biologists, the evolutionary hypothesis is the most generally accepted basis of investigation by scientists, such a declaration would automatically exclude leading scientists from the church. And if the influence of critically minded persons is to be eliminated from theological discussion, the way is wide open for the domination of religious thinking by enthusiastic propagandists and demagogues. If scientists are to be excluded from a share in the making of religious opinion, religion is left to the unscientific minds for its interpretation. It may

[1] Quoted in *Painted Windows*, by A Gentleman with a Duster (p. 198).

easily come to be the exclusive property of the ignorant. If this impression should become prevalent, what would become of the leadership of the church?

The fundamentalist denunciation of the evolutionary hypothesis, then, is suited to develop a remarkably single-minded, militant type of religion. Of the religious zeal of these crusaders there can be no doubt. But if Christianity is to influence the culture of the twentieth century as it has influenced the culture of the past, it must find a way in which the science of our day may be positively correlated with religious aspirations. Against this development fundamentalism has fixedly set its face.

2. A more common attitude with regard to the evolutionary hypothesis is what may be called the "harmonizing" position. The advocates of this position start from the statement that since the same God created the world and revealed himself in the Bible, the statements of the Bible cannot contradict the realities of the universe. If, then, any supposed contradiction is found between what the Bible teaches and what science teaches, the contradiction is due to a false interpretation of either the Bible or of science, or of both. Said Dr. A. H. Strong, "It may be safely said that science has not yet shown any fairly interpreted passage of Scripture to be untrue."[1] Says President E. Y. Mullins:

> Science and Scripture agree remarkably in placing man at the end of the series of gradations in nature. All the lower stages precede man in the account of Genesis. According to science, man sums up all the past in himself and then goes far beyond all lower stages.[2]

[1] *Systematic Theology*, I, 224.

[2] *The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression*, p. 254.

This method of harmonizing the Bible with modern science was developed in detail some fifty years ago, when serious efforts were made to equate the statements of the first chapter of Genesis with the findings of geological science. The "days" were said to mean geological epochs, and the conditions depicted in each of the creative "days" were shown to be almost precisely what science declared to be the actual case. By the exercise of sufficient ingenuity, an apparently striking parallel could be drawn between the scriptural account and the process of evolution hypothetically set forth by geologists.

> The order is the same in both Scripture and nature: First, a formless waste or nebulous chaos; second, a division of the earth from the firmament, or the separation of the nebulous planet from the rest of the solar nebula; third, the gathering of the seas and appearing of dry land to bring forth grass and herb and plant, or the evolution of the terraqueous globe with its sunlike photosphere and commencing verdure; fourth, the sun, moon, and stars to give light upon the earth and to be for signs and for seasons . . . . or the establishment of the mature planet in the solar system with its zones and climates, its day and night and summer and winter; fifth, the swarming of the water and air with great fishes and winged fowl or the evolution of the lower animals of the organic scale; sixth, the earth bringing forth beasts each after its kind, and the making of man in the image of God . . . . or the evolution of the higher animals of the organic scale and the production of man as the most perfect and dominant animal of the globe; seventh, the rest of God from his work, or the repose of nature, since man appeared upon the earth.[1]

When thus stated in general terms, those not specifically acquainted with science might well be led to think that the first chapter of Genesis anticipated scientific

[1] Charles W. Shields, *The Scientific Evidences of Revealed Religion* (1900), p. 94.

findings to a remarkable degree. But a little closer examination reveals the fact that the coincidences are secured only by considerable juggling of the text of Scripture. The "evening and the morning" of each day mentioned in Genesis disappear. Geological epochs merge into one another without any definite dividing line. To divide this process into "days" is highly arbitrary. Moreover, no scientist, if he were to identify the epochs, would divide the process into anything like the stages assigned by the theological harmonizers. Such items as the appearance of advanced vegetation before the sun was created are passed over altogether too easily. These discrepancies suggest the query why, if the scriptural account was dictated by divine wisdom, the order of events in Genesis should not correspond more closely to what science discovers to have been the fact. The attempt to harmonize actually discloses the crudity of the biblical picture from a scientific standpoint.

This leads to the further consideration. The "true" meaning of Genesis, if science and the Bible are to agree, is discovered only after modern science has ascertained what the facts are. Just what is the value of a "revelation" which is so obscure that its "true" meaning could not be found out until modern science gave the clew? As a matter of fact, since one can learn with far more definiteness the actual stages in the evolution of the earth by consulting a scientific textbook than by reading a biblical account which has to be "interpreted," the actual prestige of the Bible is gone.

The harmonizing position, therefore, is being rapidly abandoned today. It is admitted that the Bible was not intended to teach modern science. There is less and less

inclination to risk discrediting the Bible by trying to claim for it a scientific authority which it as a matter of fact does not possess.

But this modified way of treating the matter fails to face some real and important questions. It is assumed that the *religious* attitude reflected in the Bible may be identical with the religious valuation of the universe when this is interpreted by modern science. It is declared by the harmonizers that both the biblical writer and the modern man may say "In the beginning, God." But that word "beginning" is scarcely consonant with the religious significance of an evolutionary view. The "beginnings" of things are quite insignificant in comparison with what has occurred during the age-long evolution since those "beginnings." The most important aspects of the universe as we know it are those which are due to a process which is still going on, and which will inevitably bring still other changes. If religion is to retain any important place in the thinking of an evolutionist, it must cease to stake its case on a theological declaration as to the far-off origins of the world. It must advance to a religious interpretation of the never-ceasing process itself. It must find significance in that into which things develop quite as much as in the origins out of which they develop.

3. Another way in which adjustment is sought is that made familiar by Henry Drummond in a book which had enormous influence in the eighties and the early nineties—*Natural Law in the Spiritual World.* It is only fair to say that Mr. Drummond himself abandoned this position in his later works; but in this earlier discussion he expounded it with all the enthusiasm of one who has made a new discovery.

This conception regards the evolutionary process as one which is interrupted at definite points by the initiation of a new kind of reality. Between the realms thus separated by the interruption there is no actual continuity. A lower realm cannot evolve into a higher realm. For example, the inorganic realm has no power to produce life. It can be transformed into living matter only as life from a higher order (the organic) reaches down and takes possession of it. Following this analogy, it is possible to maintain something like the familiar conception of a natural world with a supernatural realm above it.

> The door from the inorganic to the organic is shut, no mineral can open it; so the door from the natural to the spiritual is shut, no man can open it. This world of natural men is staked off from the spiritual world by barriers which have never yet been crossed from within. . . . . The spiritual world is guarded from the world next in order beneath by a law of biogenesis—*except a man be born again . . . . except he be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God* (*op. cit.*, p. 64).

Following this suggestion, various writers have undertaken to give to the evolutionary conception its rights, so long as it is not allowed to "rule out the supernatural." If it can be asserted that at various points in the process a new beginning can be observed, and if it can be shown that this new beginning could not be derived from what preceded, room is left for something like the familiar doctrine of divine creation. If a new beginning cannot be accounted for by showing that it grew out of what preceded, it is possible to suppose that God stepped in with a creative deed.

The points at which this supernatural divine activity was alleged to have intervened were: the gap between the inorganic and the realm of living beings; the gap between

unconscious organic life and sentient beings; and the gap between animals and man. Following this analysis it was asserted that we have another gap between men in general and Christ. Christ thus initiates a new stage in evolution. His divinity is expressed in this fact. God creatively intervened in Christ to produce through him a new order of beings—redeemed men.

This solution of the difficulty is not unlike the old theory of different divine "dispensations" in religious history. If it is accepted, it enables one to retain the familiar emphasis on the supernatural, in the sense of definite divine interventions to create something which otherwise would not have come into existence at all. It makes it possible to think of God primarily in terms of a creator who initiates "beginnings," and thus to preserve the religious attitude of the first chapter of Genesis. It lends itself admirably to the doctrine of salvation by a divine Christ. In fact, it preserves all the essentials of the orthodox theology except the doctrine of an infallible Bible.

But on closer examination, several embarrassing questions arise. The validity of the position depends on keeping intact the gaps between the different stages of evolution, in order to have a place for God to display his creative work. But the steady influence of scientific research is to eliminate the gaps. If life should actually be artificially created in a laboratory, what place would be left for divine intervention? If human beings should come to be classified with non-human species, what would become of a theology which depended on gaps for its validity? Those who take the above position are compelled to be on their guard lest scientific research shall invalidate their primary assumption.

Again, this method of thinking apparently preserves the familiar category of the supernatural. It has definite places for divine intervention. But these avenues of the transcendent divine activity do not correspond to the miracles of the older theology. The biblical scheme has been abandoned for a supposed scientific foundation. Those who attempt to elaborate a theology on this basis find themselves between two different conceptions. They cannot appeal to biblical authority, for they are not preserving the biblical world-view. Neither can they appeal to modern science, for they are resting their theological conclusions on "gaps" which science is constantly attempting to bridge. In consequence, they are likely to please neither the conservatives nor the radicals.

4. In recent years interpretations of the evolutionary theory have been generally abandoning the attempt to preserve the conception of a super-evolutionary transcendent God, who breaks through into the natural order at definite points. It is coming to be seen that the evolutionary process must be taken as a whole. Evolution means continuity. But as this process is better understood, it is seen to consist in a marvellous variety. It is as if an experimentation of infinite fertility were being conducted, always within the limitations of continuity between what has been and what is coming to pass. The French philosopher Bergson focussed attention on this new way of conceiving the process by a brilliant discussion entitled *Creative Evolution.* Starting from a survey of what biology discloses as to the nature of life, he suggested that those philosophers and theologians who undertook to explain things by reference to a transcendent, non-evolutionary power were involved in hopeless

difficulties. The actual facts seem to indicate that life itself is a creative force, ever striving to make more elastic the forms in which it expresses itself. The outcome of life is not determined by mechanical laws. Life has an inventiveness, a creative fertility which makes possible a real evolution. But there is no "final goal" of the evolutionary process so definite that life is bound to come to this goal rather than to any other. There is indeed purposiveness, in the sense that life is seeking to realize ends instead of being merely a product of past forces. But the ends are experimentally being worked out throughout the entire process. There is no fixed teleology. There is simply a never-ceasing creative striving on the part of life to find the best ways of realizing life's potentialities.

A somewhat similar conception of the immanent creative character of the evolutionary process was worked out by Professor C. Lloyd Morgan in his volume entitled *Emergent Evolution*. He insisted that there is no meaning to the idea of evolution unless it be clearly recognized that in the process something new emerges. "If nothing emerge—if there be only regrouping of pre-existing elements and nothing more—then there is no emergent evolution."

It is to be noted that this conception of creative or emergent evolution, like the "gap theory," makes a place for genuinely new stages in the evolutionary process. But, unlike that theory, it does not undertake to explain the coming of the new by the intervention of a transcendent power. The evolutionary process itself is of such a character that it does not proceed on a dead-level of uniformity. It is creatively active, so that we have what Principal Jacks has called "a living universe." For con-

venience' sake this actively creative character of the entire process is spoken of as a "striving" of reality at one "level" of existence to achieve a "higher level." From this point of view, it is impossible to explain an occurrence entirely in terms of the causative power of the past. There is as truly a something in the as yet unrealized future which lures the evolutionary movement onward. A place is thus made for a reinstatement of teleology in the cosmic process; only this teleology is entirely immanent, a never-ceasing aspect of creative adjustment.

If this aspect of the hypothesis of evolution be taken, it makes imperative a way of looking at things which is quite different from the traditional theological attitude. The doctrines with which we are familiar undertake to base our religious faith on what has occurred in the past. Man's religious capacity is declared to be due to the manner in which the first man was created. Our knowledge of God is alleged to have been given in its most complete form in an ancient sacred literature. Our salvation is believed to have been made possible by a "work" of Christ accomplished centuries ago. In order to give a firm foundation to faith, it has been deemed necessary to insist on the supreme perfection of these items. Man is said to have been created perfect; and his present sinfulness is explained as due to a "fall" from that original perfection. The Bible is defined as an infallible book. The "plan of salvation" has been represented as a final provision made by divine wisdom for man's rescue. To a large extent theologians are still struggling with the problem of adjusting the theory of evolution to a religious philosophy which stakes its case entirely on the absolute perfection of some past stage of history.

The evolutionary conception, however, turns attention definitely toward the future. If religion is wedded to the past, there can be at best only a patched-up compromise between two incompatible ways of thinking. But if theologians should begin to turn to the future for their norms, the evolutionary hypothesis might then be turned to positive account. If the attempt should be made to define God, not in terms of a "first" cause of remote beginnings, but rather as a power residing in the evolutionary process luring things on to a better future, we might see a new theology which would draw largely on the findings of modern science.

There are hints that such a changed method in theology may soon come into vogue. It has already been worked out with reference to the doctrine of immortality. Professor A. P. Mathews has pointed out that the struggle of life to make more fruitful contacts with environment has led to what he calls the "development of freedom." Primitive forms of life are helplessly dependent on the environment in which they chance to be located. With the evolution of more complex structures, the capacity for locomotion gives freedom from the limitations of a fixed habitat. When we rise to the human species we find the mental capacity which enables man to plan far ahead and to modify environment to a large extent to suit his purposes. In conclusion, Professor Mathews says:

> There has been a definite order in evolution; we might almost say a definite aim. The road of evolution has not always been direct, but so far as the land has permitted it has followed straight towards a city—the city of man's desire, the castle of his will. The goal is liberty. Liberty for what? Is not the answer in every man's conscience? Is it, can it be anything else than the final liberty of

the spirit? Liberty for that part of the immortal consciousness of the universe which is imprisoned within us. . . . . Evolution is the spirit struggling to throw off the trammels of matter. . . . . The goal of evolution—can it be anything else than immortality?[1]

A similar argument is built upon the facts of evolution by Professor James Y. Simpson. After a careful and minute examination of everything that is known about the origin of man and his early history, Professor Simpson declares that "the history of Evolution is the history of the gradual emancipation of the organism from the physical determinative aspects of environment. . . . . It looks as if the purpose of Evolution were to create free beings in the world."[2]

Interesting hints toward a reconstruction of theology on the basis of a thoroughgoing evolutionary view have been recently given by a British philosopher. He pictures reality as consisting in a never-ceasing evolutionary process, in the course of which new qualities are constantly emerging. To existence on a lower level, any new quality thus emerging would seem like a divine reality. There is in the evolutionary process a constant *nisus* or struggle toward the production of higher forms of existence. The word "God" indicates for any given being the next higher level of existence. Such a god is all that the reality in question can comprehend of the infinite *nisus* toward deity.

For any level of existence, deity is the next higher variable quality. It is therefore a variable quality, and as the world grows in time, deity changes with it. On each level a new quality looms ahead, awfully, which plays the part of deity. . . . . To creatures

[1] *Yale Review*, January, 1922, p. 352.

[2] *Man and the Attainment of Immortality*, pp. 236 and 237.

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upon the level of life, deity is still the quality in front, but to us who come later this quality has been revealed as mind.[1]

These suggestions are meager indications of what may occur when once the attention of religious interpreters is turned toward the future rather than toward the past. Theologians have attempted to define God as the immutable absolute. For God the time-process was believed to have no meaning. When God is thus conceived, a premium is put upon immobility. That theology is best which never changes. Ethical precepts must be thought of as absolutely authoritative. There has always been difficulty in correlating this conception of God with the changing exigencies of the world of our experience. For the most part the interpretations of the evolutionary conception have undertaken to establish some sort of adjustment between supposedly unchanging tenets of religion and the changing aspects of an evolving universe.

If once the evolutionary conception be taken as fundamental, religious thinking is released for a forward look. Religion itself is seen to be a development, in which the interests of the present and the future are supreme. Whereas formerly the attempt was made to exalt the faith of our fathers, today concern is being felt for the religion of our children. Changes of doctrine which take place are no longer regarded with suspicion but are indications of the continued vitality of religion. Even if we cannot see just where the process of developing thought will lead, we are content to trust the future to take care of itself. A new kind of confidence takes the place of the old quest for absolute assurance. The fact of human progress is seen to be a part of the inevitable evolutionary

[1] S. Alexander, *Time, Space, and Deity*, p. 348.

process; and religious faith seeks in the cosmos which produced us and which carries us along the evidence of the activity of God. The realm of religion is opened up for fresh investigation; and the vastness of the universe in time and in space furnishes the basis for a majestic mysticism which seeks to lift human life higher by enabling men to worship and to trust the power that is carrying forward the age-long process. It will take decades for this new conception to work itself out, but we may confidently expect stimulating interpretations of religion as men come to feel at home in a changing world with its marvellous creative possibilities.

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XI

THE SPIRIT OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY

There is widespread concern today lest evangelical Christianity may be weakened or lost. Serious discussions and controversies in Protestantism are being inspired by this concern. Charges are being made of a widespread apostasy from the evangelical faith, and Christians are being urged to make valiant battle against the forces which are alleged to be set in array against our precious inheritance. All who have at heart the welfare of religion in America recognize that evangelical Christianity has been a most important creative spiritual power. To conserve and to strengthen it means to avail ourselves of the momentum of a type of religion which has commanded general love and devotion.

But what *is* evangelical Christianity? It is currently defined in terms of certain theological doctrines; and it is assumed that, if these doctrines be kept intact, evangelical Christianity will be maintained in all its power. But even a casual survey reveals the fact that doctrinal tests tell us very little about the actual state of religious life. There are here and there churches standing rigidly for the doctrines declared to be "evangelical," which are nevertheless so pharisaical in their self-satisfaction, so marked by a willingness to criticize and condemn those who differ from them, that they seem largely to have lost the spirit of Jesus. Such churches are religiously unfruitful. There

are others equally orthodox in doctrine which manifest a warm, persuasive, winsome spirit and are centers of genuine ministry to needy souls. The difference between the two is not due to doctrine. Again, there are some liberal churches which have become little more than esoteric clubs for the edification of a select group. But there are others in which a modernized interpretation of Christianity is the instrument of winning men to a devout consecration to Jesus Christ and of building up a self-giving missionary spirit. To attempt to define evangelical Christianity by doctrinal tenets leads us only into confusion.

And yet this is the way in which the definition is usually made. Even so broad-minded a man as Garvie defines evangelicalism as "the mode of Christian thought in which emphasis is laid on salvation from sin by man's faith in God's grace through the sacrifice of Christ." As if evangelicalism were a "mode of thought"! The inadequacy of this definition is immediately betrayed by Garvie when he continues:

> It is not committed to one plan of salvation or one theory of the Atonement; but may change and adapt its presentation of what to it is central in Christianity to the changing conditions and forms of thought. It should no more be bound in the fetters of its past than should "pure and undefiled religion" be discredited by the corruption or superstitions of savages, or modern astronomy by ancient astrology, even though the evangelicalism of the past, however defective it may appear to us now, was relative to the thought and life of its age, satisfying and efficient for goodness and godliness to many of the best men and women.[1]

If, as Garvie insists, the doctrinal content of evangelicalism must change with the general changes of thought, it is futile to define it in terms of doctrine.

[1] Garvie, *The Evangelical Type of Theology*, p. 47.

A historical understanding of the development of this type of Christianity will throw light on certain aspects which doctrinal tests fail to reveal. The *spirit* of evangelical Christianity is quite as important as is its theology.

It is now generally recognized that the central emphasis in Luther's interpretation of Christianity was on the necessity for a genuine personal *experience* of religion. In the place of the word of the priest absolving the sinner, Luther insisted on an experience of personal assurance of forgiveness. This emphasis has far-reaching consequences. If, as in the Catholic church, the most important thing is the authoritative word of a priest of the church, supreme stress will be laid upon the formal authority of the priest who pronounces the word of absolution and upon the formal authority of the system which the priest officially administers. In Catholicism the all-important concept is that of *authority*. The Catholic justifies his beliefs and his official acts by an appeal to an original divine appointment. Christianity exists as a system of doctrines and rites carrying saving grace for all who will avail themselves of the divine provision. But the condition of salvation is submission to this authoritatively provided system. *Salus extra ecclesiam non est.* "No one can be saved outside the church."

The Lutheran emphasis on a personal experience leads religious thinking in a very different direction. The power of Christianity is to be proved by asking what it accomplishes in the inner life of men rather than by asking whether it is authoritatively established. Consistently with this conception of religion Luther abolished the distinction between clergy and laity. There are no officially distinct administrators of Christianity upon whom all

others must be dependent. A person's capacity to help others depends on the depth of his own experience, not on a special endowment of ordaining grace. In repudiating the conception of an authoritative church Luther logically appealed to the test of a living experience as supreme over claims of official appointment.

But the Protestant movement was compelled to defend itself. And the defense required both by the Roman church and by the current apologetics of the time was along the lines made familiar by centuries of Catholic theology. It was assumed that the sole valid form of Christianity is that officially established by Christ. Protestantism, in order to justify itself before the opinion of the world, was compelled to prove that Catholicism was a perversion of the original intent of Christ and that the evangelical form of Christianity was the type instituted by him. The appeal was more and more made to the authority of an original institution rather than to the evidence of a profounder religious life. Not that the latter was ignored. It was constantly stressed. But it was never permitted to take the first place in apologetics.

One consequence of this retention of the authoritative theological method was the development of bitter doctrinal disputes between different branches of Protestantism. If there is only one authorized form of Christianity, each group in Christendom will, of course, seek to show that it alone holds the divine commission. Those who differ from it in doctrine or in polity must be denounced because they are seeking to operate with false credentials. A Protestant theologian has usually assumed that his main task was to prove the scriptural—that is the official—genuineness of the doctrines and polity held by

his denomination. Such a method relegates the testimony of religious experience to a minor place.

The logical outcome of an appeal to authority is the employment of coercion against those who will not submit. Catholicism, with its practice of coercitive discipline, was entirely consistent here. Early Protestantism saw no objection to the use of coercion. Heretics or dissenters were subjected to imprisonment, torture, and even death. Authority simply *must* be recognized. To permit authority to be defied would be to give up authority entirely. Dissent must be treated as sin. The inner convictions of men must yield to the outer demands of the system. If actual coercion becomes impossible, dogmatic denunciations express the same spirit.

What is historically known as the evangelical movement in Protestantism—that awakening which manifested such power in the eighteenth century, and which has largely shaped our American Christianity—represents a different spirit. If we consider this movement in the Pietism of the Continent, the great Wesleyan revival, and the Great Awakening in America, we find that attention was given primarily to the creation of a profound religious experience. A characteristic feature of the pietistic revival under the guidance of Spener was the formation of what were called *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*—the organization of little voluntary groups of earnest Christians within the larger formal membership of the church, which met for devotional reading of the Bible and for mutual edification through testimony and prayer. The Bible was to be used to create religious life and love in the individual, instead of being regarded as an arsenal of weapons to be employed against heretics and nonconformists. The

non-religious character of the elaborate theologies formulated by the traditional Protestant theologians was frankly recognized by some Pietists. One of them, on being inducted into a chair in the theological faculty of a university, is said to have declared that, while it was usually assumed that the duty of a theological professor is to take the Christian students who come to him and make theologians out of them, he intended to reverse the process. He expected to take the young theologians who came to him and attempt to make Christians out of them.

Pietism, the religion of the Moravian Brethren, and the Wesleyan movement are all remarkable for their freedom from attempts to Christianize the world by compelling subjection to an official system. Persecutions and theological denunciations were largely left to the representatives of the established churches. For these evangelicals the all-important thing was to deepen religious experience in professed Christians, in order that the spiritual power of such lives might overflow in evangelical and missionary endeavor. Mrs. Jonathan Edwards wrote in 1740 concerning the preaching of Whitefield: "He makes less of the doctrines than our American preachers generally do, and aims more at affecting the heart."

It is, of course, true that the great preachers in the evangelical revival used doctrines already affirmed by Protestant orthodoxy and that they insisted on the necessity of these doctrines in opposition to rationalistic theories. This fact has led to the common impression that the heart of evangelical Christianity is found in the insistence on certain crucial doctrines. The "evangelical test" employed in our modern Christianity is primarily doctrinal. But these doctrines alone do not distinguish

the evangelical movement from the formal orthodoxy which evangelicalism condemned for its religious impotence. So far as these doctrines were concerned, they were taken for granted by Christians generally. What the evangelicals desired was not a peculiar theological system but a deepening of the religious life on the basis of doctrines already accepted as true. The aim of evangelical preaching was to secure a personal experience of salvation in which the doctrines should become something more than mere intellectual affirmations.

In this connection it is significant that the organization of distinctively evangelical groups of Christians was almost entirely free from attempts to prove that the evangelical group was the sole authoritative church. Pietism never sought to become a new church. It was a movement for the deepening of the religious life within the existing church. Count Zinzendorf was concerned for the cultivation of a warm personal experience of intimate spiritual fellowship with Christ and had no wish to found a new sect which should enter into rivalry with other sects. The Methodist movement would have remained within the Anglican church if the Anglicanism of the day had been sufficiently elastic to permit the free expression of unconventional religious activities. The Methodist denomination has never put doctrinal tests first but has always been looking for a deepened religious experience as the primary thing. Methodism has no "distinctive doctrines." It stands rather for a more profound religious experience of truths which are already presupposed.

In short, the religious power of evangelical Christianity is to be found in its inner spirit rather than in any particular system of doctrines. Theologically, in the eight-

eenth century, Christendom was divided into the Calvinistic and the Arminian bodies. But in the evangelical movement we find Calvinists and Arminians equally zealous and equally successful. Who would seek to do justice to Whitefield by calling attention to his Calvinism, and to Wesley by emphasizing his Arminianism? The common evangelicalism of these great preachers is far more important than their doctrinal divergences.

The evangelical movement was primarily concerned to create in each individual an experience of salvation which should generate love and devotion. Evangelicalism did not rely on the heavy hand of authority with its penalties and discipline. It sought rather to win the affections of men so that they should voluntarily give themselves to the cause of Christ. Instead of elaborating arguments to prove that Christ had committed the keys to some one ecclesiastical body, evangelicalism sought to present the message of salvation so persuasively that men would gladly trust in the saving grace of God in Christ. Instead of setting up a new sect with claims of authoritative doctrine, evangelicalism sought to deepen the religious life in all the various branches of Christendom, using doctrines already taken for granted, and seeking to bring about a real personal experience of the meaning of these doctrines. Instead of being polemic, as were the formal sects of Protestantism, evangelicalism was irenic, interdenominational, democratic. If distinctive evangelical bodies were formed, it was usually because of the intolerance of a parent body rather than because of the desires of the evangelicals themselves. The spirit of evangelicalism is the spirit of loving persuasion in contrast to the spirit of a Christianity which exalts the idea of formal

authority and proposes to penalize dissenters. Its motto might be expressed in the words "Win the world to Christ," while the churches basing their claims on an authoritative foundation would say, "Conquer the world in the name of Christ." It is no accident that, while the standard churches were still disputing over questions of doctrine and polity, evangelicalism first made prominent the missionary enterprise.

If the analysis here given be correct, it throws light on the task of evangelical Christianity today. If it be true that evangelicalism represents an emphasis on a genuine and profound Christian experience rather than a reliance on a doctrinal system, the vitality of evangelical Christianity cannot be preserved by doctrinal disputations. Those who today are laying primary stress on the acceptance of specific doctrines regardless of what happens to the inner life of men, are being led thereby to revert to the ideals and practices of the formal orthodoxy whose religious barrenness provoked the evangelical protest. We see reappearing all that apparatus of heresy-hunting which marked Christianity when the Roman Catholic spirit dominated the whole Christian world and the churches were primarily concerned with rival claims of authority. In an age which is manifesting a deep longing for the union of Christian forces, and which is more and more ready to judge men by their ways of living rather than on the basis of theology, we find the advocates of a doctrinally defined evangelicalism introducing division and urging Christians to line up in hostile camps. The attempt to preserve unchanged the doctrines with which evangelicalism operated so successfully in former centuries leads to formidable difficulties in an age when modes of

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thought and feeling have markedly changed. We ought clearly to recognize that when primary emphasis is laid on doctrinal conformity, even though the doctrines in question be precisely those which were affirmed by the earlier evangelicals, men are in danger of losing the spirit of evangelicalism in the endeavor to save the outward form.

But if the strength of evangelical Christianity depends on persuasive appeal, there are one or two conditions which may well command our thoughtful attention. The great evangelical preachers in the past invited those whom they addressed to share with them a precious privilege. The experience of fellowship with God was something so real and so far-reaching in its consequences that they stood before their fellow-men conscious of possessing an inestimable spiritual treasure which they wished to share. No one can be a representative of evangelical Christianity unless religion is a precious personal possession.

It is in this connection that the hostility of evangelicalism to rationalism is to be understood. When the study of religion is primarily an intellectual pursuit, religion tends to lose its spiritual power. It more and more comes to be a form of philosophy to be contemplated with academic calm. But the religion which the evangelical knows is a revolutionary upheaval of the soul. A man discovers within himself a new self, strangely and awfully related to God. The new self dares to repudiate the comfort-seeking conventions of superficial human nature and to consecrate itself to vast spiritual enterprises. For it relies no longer on the timid counsels of conventional prudence but is strong with the courage inspired by the con-

sciousness that God works within the man of faith both to will and to do. It is the personal discovery that religion is a creative power in the inmost citadel of the heart that admits one to the fellowship of evangelical Christians.

But if the secret of evangelical power is to be found in a personal religious experience, which both humbles a man with a sense of his unworthiness in the presence of God and at the same time creates in him a faith which dares to aspire and to sacrifice, we need to heed a fact often overlooked. So profound an experience is possible only on the basis of an absolute honesty. It is here that the devotees of doctrinal regularity are blind to certain factors indispensable to Christian experience.

Several years ago George Kennan wrote of a winter's experience which he had in Jerry McAuley's mission in New York City. He told how one evening two young men from a respectable church came to the mission and testified in a perfectly correct fashion, using all the phrases dear to evangelistic fervor. But in the atmosphere of that prayer meeting the phrases somehow did not ring true. As soon as the testimonies had been given, Jerry McAuley quietly arose and said: "If you want to get religion and follow Christ, feel honestly and speak the truth. God hates shams." Kennan remarked that immediately everybody seemed to breathe more freely, as if the rebuke had cleared the whole spiritual atmosphere. Here was a noted evangelist who clearly saw that inner honesty was of more importance than doctrinal correctness. We are reminded of Jesus' condemnation of hypocrisy.

"God hates shams." In the acceptance of the specific doctrines concerning the Bible and concerning the work of Christ which marked the work of the eighteenth-cen-

tury evangelists there was no suggestion of sham. These men believed with all their heart in the truth of that which they professed. Moreover, they could assume on the part of their hearers an equally honest acceptance of these doctrines. They could be single-minded and therefore thoroughly consecrated. There are noble and devout souls today who can repeat without any misgivings the creeds of a century and a half ago. We all know such whose purity of life and whose consecration to Christ make us feel very humble in their presence.

But there are others who have been led by their conscientious study of the facts to conceive the world and its laws, the nature of man and his relation to God, in terms consonant with our modern science and our modern social outlook. If God hates shams, what does a religious experience require on the part of these modern seekers after the truth? What does the spirit of evangelicalism suggest? Evidently that the aim of religion should be to deepen the experience of the spiritual realities implied in doctrines which are honestly accepted as true. That revised doctrines are capable of sustaining a humble and prayerful relation to God, a vital consecration to Jesus, a growing sense of unity with the creative presence of the Divine Spirit within us, and a glad devotion to the Kingdom of God is an undeniable fact. It is equally true that in the hands of an irreligious spirit these revised doctrines may be turned into occasions for theological strife. Those who are honestly convinced that the revised theological conceptions so current in our schools of higher learning today are true should be on their guard lest they stop with mere intellectual assent. For a new theology is just as capable of religious barrenness as was the formal

orthodoxy which evangelicalism confronted. The evangelical spirit will seek to interpret theology, whether old or new, as the expression of so profound and persuasive an experience of fellowship with God that Christianity shall be brought to the attention of men, not as a formal system, but as a Christlike way of living. Those who know the power and the joy of this way of life are the real representatives of evangelical Christianity.

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